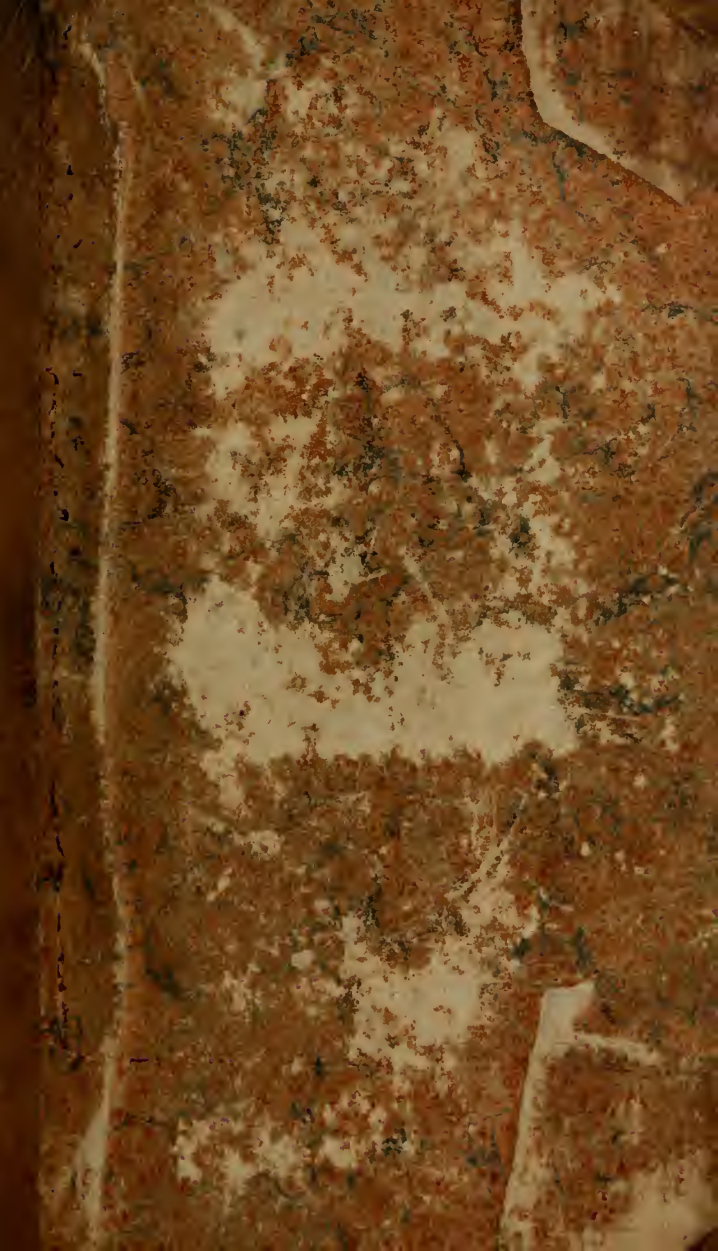

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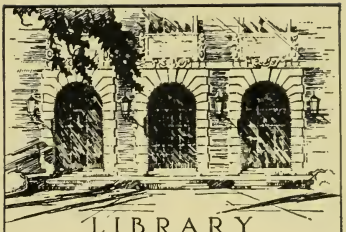

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WHAT SHALL BE, SHALL BE.

A NOVEL.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

WHAT SHALL BE, SHALL BE.

A Novel.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

MRS. MEEKE,

AUTHOR OF THE

VEILED PROTECTRESS; OLD WIFE AND YOUNG HUSBAND; THERE IS A SECRET! FIND IT OUT; WHICH IS THE MAN? THE SPANISH CAMPAIGN, &c.

Who is it, that will doubt
The care of Heaven; or think immortal
Pow'rs are slow, 'cause they take the privilege
To choose their own time, when they will send their
Blessings down? DAVENANT.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

A. K. NEWMAN AND CO. LEADENHALL-STREET.

1823.

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WHAT SHALL BE, SHALL BE.

CHAPTER I.

NOTHING worthy relating took place during Martin's journey home, as farmer Abinger's might be now termed, where he arrived about ten in the evening. The colonel was at supper, and did not allow himself time to finish his meal before the valet was summoned to give in the report of his mission, his master having accounted for his absence, by saying he had sent him to fetch some papers from London. Being left together, the colonel anxiously inquired whether he had learnt any thing

likely to repay him for the trouble and fatigue he had undergone.

Martin briefly related every thing that had occurred since his departure from Bristol: his master was by no means surprised that he had been baffled by Mrs. Harland's resolution to shun him; and was highly amused by the shopboy's remarks, which was a proof that she had been overmatched in cunning, calculated as she was to mislead and deceive every one with whom she was connected: the *law lord* was undoubtedly lord Delmont. The apprentice, when he so wisely observed he was not the chancellor, meant Martin to understand he was in the ministry; and his talents as a statesman were more than equalled by the varnish he could spread over his vices. How mortified he would have felt, had he been aware he had not been able to dupe a lubberly boy, whom he doubtless considered as beneath his notice! Thus reasoned the colonel, till addressing the attentive Martin—"You never

never were more in need of repose; to-morrow you shall endeavour to learn some farther particulars respecting the lad who has left farmer Griffiths's, as we must be guided by circumstances, and endeavour to buy him off, should he have enlisted as a soldier, or engaged himself as a sailor; but for the present, only think of taking something warm, and retiring to rest. I shall sleep the better from knowing you are safe, since I have a sort of intuitive dread of Mrs. Harland and her protector, whose situation gives him such power; and he is naturally such a tyrant, that wo be to those who fall under his displeasure: indeed, I half agree with my uncle, that it is almost rash to dare to cope with such a favourite of fortune."

Martin gaily observed, that he suspected this much-admired statesman had met with his match in Mrs. Harland, who was a sort of *noli me tangere* in his flesh, that reminded him much oftener than he would have wished of his former errors.

The colonel thought it not unlikely she might prove his torment—when taking his night-candle, he peremptorily dismissed Martin, to take the repose he so much needed.

He attended as usual at breakfast, when his master gave him *carte blanche*, merely recommending a proper degree of caution, and desiring that he would not, if he could avoid it, mention his name, since till he was more *au fait* respecting the runaway, he did not wish to appear interested in his concerns. Thus cautioned, he left home about half past eleven, as for a walk, meaning to drop in at farmer Griffiths's about his dinner hour, when he should probably meet him at home: he could easily apologize for having called at so unseasonable an hour, and had framed an excuse which he was sure would pass current: he preferred the high road to the footpath, as it was very probable that he might either meet or be overtaken by the farmer, who very seldom extended his walks

walks beyond his homestead; he was therefore slowly proceeding, arranging his plans as he went along, when he came in sight of the public-house already mentioned, which was within a hundred yards of the lane leading to Griffiths's: he had no intention of stopping there, but as he was obliged to pass the door, he was no sooner within hearing, than he was hailed by the landlord—"Good morning, sir: what say you to a draught of my home-brewed to get you an appetite? you were pleased to praise it the other day," pouring a bumper glass out of a jug in his hand while speaking, which he handed to a man on horseback.

"Well thought of," replied Martin, in the same gay tone; "a glass of good ale ought never to be refused," joining the party, which consisted of a coachman and groom, who had been exercising their masters' horses; and on a bench at the door sat three men, one of whom was evidently very much in liquor, and the others

were trying to persuade him to return home, which he swore he would not do, even to please king George himself.

As words ran high in consequence of his obstinacy, the landlord, who perceived Martin was regarding them, said, in a half whisper—"A drunken Welchman, who has quarrelled with his master; his fellow-servants are endeavouring to get him away; for here has he been ever since Tuesday evening: you were here in the morning while a postchaise was waiting for a lady; you asked the postboy to give you a cast."

"I remember the circumstance, since I was obliged to walk to Bristol."

"Well, I believe that lady was the cause of the rumpus that led to Jenkins's getting drunk; for he is naturally a very sober fellow, and a very good workman: he came with farmer Griffiths into this neighbourhood some ten or twelve years since: I really forget the exact time, nor does it matter to you or me."

Now

Now Martin was very anxious to have this ascertained, when he reflected, that fools, children, and drunkards, seldom keep a guard over their tongue; therefore wished he could enter into conversation with the Welchman; but that seemed impracticable at present; he therefore returned to the landlord, saying, in a half whisper —"You rather raised my curiosity respecting that lady, the last time I was here."

"I believe I might—ay, ay, she is a nice one, I make no doubt! and Jenkins is in too many of hers and his master's secrets; and being provoked by the latter and his wife, when they were in their cups, why, they forgot how wise he was, since, according to him, they both laid violent hands upon him, because he spoke his mind rather too freely, which induced him to leave their house in a rage, and he has been here ever since: he wanted me to recommend him to a lawyer, as he is bent upon bringing an action against his master

for an assault. By way of pacifying him, I made him drunk, and he has never been to say sober since: but liquor has not mended his temper, as he is still bent upon going to law."

"All Welchmen," joined in the coachman, "are famous friends to the lawyers. I have heard something about the row at Griffiths's; it was all about William Mansel, who has left them these four months; they will never meet with his fellow: I never saw such an *ingenus* chap; he could turn his hand to but every thing: the beautiful things in ivory he has turned for our young ladies; and he made the prettiest baskets I ever saw: if he is a relation of Griffiths, as they once said, he was worth a thousand of his looby sons; and as to their having taken him out of charity, I know better than that. Some lady used to pay for his board and schooling, so they were obliged to give him better learning than their own cubs: indeed, the late curate, Mr. Carter, has told our

our ladies, that he was an excellent scholard, and I am sure I never saw a more personable youth, when he was clean and neat: our ladies took great notice of him, after they had seen some toys of his turning; indeed, at last, he was hail fellow with the young ones: 'tis unknown the mort of pretty things he made for them: he was a genus born, the curate used to say."

"But did not he make a hole in his manners before he went away, Thomas?" asked the landlord. "I never heard the rights of that story, as your family went to London the very week he was missing, and I have not seen you since. Was not the young lady's maid turned away upon his account?"

"She was, I believe, but I don't yet know the particulars: I mean to call upon Miss Curtis the first opportunity; I only came home the day before yesterday: she will tell me every thing: her relations have set her up in business, and I dare

say she will do very well: she served her time to a milliner and dress-maker, and a very handy, clever girl she was; they will never meet with her fellow; and I believe they are sorry enough now they parted with her; but when my master is in the saddle, all must ride. It would be as well if he thought a little of where he is going, for he wont be long here; and if the boy did kiss Miss Ellen, they are only children; but master is so proud. I heard that he either did, or attempted to kick poor Willliam out; at all events, Mrs. Curtis was sent off with a flea in her ear, and poor Miss Ellen has never been happy like since: she is afraid, the housekeeper says, that William Mansel has made away with himself, because she read in some paper, that a boy of his age was found drowned somewhere near Bath; and old squaretoes is so savage because she frets, that he makes bad worse; but, zounds!" looking at his watch, "it is time we were upon the move, Samuel, though

though the old fellow is not yet at home," paying for his ale while speaking, and riding off full speed.

Martin had been all attention to the coachman's tale; since though it confirmed the departure of William Mansel, he hoped to learn more concerning him of this Miss Curtis, when he knew where she lived, or of the Mr. Carter so often mentioned, who, he understood, had also left Westbury, and not long before his pupil took his departure: the three farming men continued to wrangle, Jenkins appearing deaf to all their persuasions; indeed, he seemed to grow more sulky and obstinate every minute—the landlord now and then putting in a word, as he was much fonder of talking than of listening, which induced Martin to observe—"I am surprised a youth, brought up like this William Mansel, should have been upon such an intimate footing in a family who keep their carriage!"

"If you knew as much of him as I do,

you would think it very natural: be he who he may, when dressed he had the presence of a prince: he need never be at a loss to get his bread; he could have maintained himself with his turning-lathe: he seemed to succeed in every thing he undertook. But I will know the truth of the tale Thomas Waring related, as I know old Curtis, the father of the young woman who lost her place so suddenly; he is an excellent man, and very well to do in the world; he has several other children, but Jane is the flower of the family. As to old Mr. Arlington, the gentleman in whose family she lived, he is the greatest tyrant that ever broke bread; he thinks his money, for he is rolling in riches, gives him a right to lord it over the whole world; but I will know, before I am many days older, whether he did ill-treat young Mansel. Jenkins has told me much more concerning him than I ever knew before. Yes, yes, Griffiths may have reason to repent, now he is sober, what he did

did while he was pot-valiant. I know he has sent those two men who are drinking with Taffy, to endeavour to entice him back; but the Welchman's blood is so thoroughly up, that he will not easily forgive, much less forget, being shoved or kicked out of doors."

"Why then, it should seem that no one knows with whom this Mansel is really connected, or where he is gone."

"No doubt it is pretty well guessed by those in the secret, though altogether it is a strange business. They do say, when rogues fall out, honest folks come at their own; and so when there is so much mystery, the parties concerned are apt to quarrel among themselves, and then the truth will out. I would myself treat my friends to a crown bowl of punch, if any of them could inform me what has really become of this boy; he was a great favourite of mine; indeed, so he was with every body: as to his kissing Miss Ellen Arlington, why it was a mere boyish prank;

prank; perhaps he then had it in his head to leave Westbury, and so merely meant to say good-bye; indeed I think, and so do others, that he has followed his friend and tutor, Mr. Carter; and pray where was the harm of his taking leave of a play-fellow? for I am sure he only considered Miss Ellen as such. Old squaretoes, as Thomas calls him, was a fool to put other thoughts in their heads; he had better shut his daughters up in glass-cases, if no one must touch them: but I suppose he thought it impossible Miss Ellen could see any thing to admire in this poor boy, as if he was not flesh and blood as well as her. The Lord help the dear young lady! when she grows older, I suppose she must not look at any body beneath a lord!"

"Then she may have reason to regret her father being so rich; but the coachman seemed to say Mr. Arlington was not in good health. How would he order matters, should he die before they are of age?"

"I dare

"I dare say he never thinks of dying; he is merely anxious to increase his hoards: money is his idol. I believe he thinks poverty a crime; for he mortally hates beggars: they do say, that he has more than a hundred thousand pounds afloat—you take me? and I dare say he is worth three times that sum: he is vastly grieved he has no son to succeed him; I dare say if he had had a boy, he might have eat gold."

"Is he an old man?" inquired Martin.

"Why, let me see, his first wife died the year I married, which was eighteen years ago come next September: he had no children by her, and he remained a widower about two years. Why, I suppose he may be sixty, or more: he had thirty thousand pounds with his first lady, and his avarice was so talked of even then, that no second woman of fortune would have married him: so being disappointed of a rich wife, as he was anxious to have children, he married for love a clergyman's daughter, whose youth and pretty face recommended

commended her to his notice; and a better wife there never will be: she is beloved by all who know her, and she does all the good that the old hunks will let her; but he makes her account to him for every shilling she spends. The eldest daughter, they say, takes after him: the youngest is the general favourite; she is just like her dear mother; but I believe both girls are fondest of her, and well they may; indeed, if they did not now and then pluck up a spirit, the old man would actually starve them, nor would he allow them a shilling pocket-money: but Thomas tells me they have either laughed or shamed him into being more generous—since, mean as he is, he wishes they should cut a dash; indeed, after his hoards, it is said that he loves both wife and children, and sometimes he does Mrs. Arlington the justice to allow that she is an excellent manager; since formerly he never kept a servant six months, and now there is not one that has not been in the family

as

as many years. His friends often ask him why he does not retire from business, since his health does not allow him to attend to it as formerly. He only wishes they could find any body rich enough to take the concern, and then hopes they will tell him how he can make equal interest of his money, admitting his clerks do feather their own nests; so while he can crawl about he will continue to attend to the main chance."

Here the prating landlord was interrupted by Jenkins's companions inquiring what they had to pay, as they did not choose to be treated, since David would not return home with them.

"No, I will not," bawled the tipsy David; "I will go to the workhouse first; though I have no fear of getting as good a situation as the one I have left, and that you may tell my old master; as I am not such a fool as he and you take me to be. I know he sent you to entice me home again. I shall call for my clothes, and

and the wages due to me, when it suits me, and let him refuse either if he dare: he shoved me out of his door, and he sha'nt coax me back again. I did not run away and leave my work half done, as farmer Tompson's man did; he was rightly served for his pains, when he was carried before a justice; but I know as much of law as my master, and he shall find I do to his cost: suppose he is my countryman, what of that? I know him, and the pretty tricks he has been playing—yes, yes, I am too wise for his interest, and I would have held my tongue, if he had kept his word with me: he never did; his promises were all moonshine, so he shall find mine: turn and turn about is but fair play. He may say he was in liquor when he laid violent hands on me, and did not know what he did: now, I am not sober, but I know what I am doing, and saying too: when he banged the door upon me, I swore a bitter oath that I would never strike another stroke for him, and I will not

not perjure myself to please him or any man."

"Come, come, you should forget and forgive, David," said one of his companions: "master is passionate, but not a bad man in the main: you had better return with us."

David would not listen to him, so calling him an obstinate, drunken brute, the men took the road home, leaving the Welchman to triumph at having defeated his master's schemes.

CHAP-

CHAPTER II.

MARTIN, who was all anxiety to draw David into conversation, made some apropos remark.—"Now, was not I right not to perjure myself, sir?"

"Surely; an oath, even if rashly taken, ought to be held sacred. You have had reason to complain, it should seem: you know best how far you can set your master at defiance."

"That for him, sir!" snapping his fingers. "You look and speak like a gentleman; and if I am poor, I am honest; and I repeat, I have been very ill used: yes, I deserved another return for more than twelve years' faithful service: and a worm will turn if trod upon."

"Your remarks are very just, my friend; but I am so much in the dark respecting your

your quarrel with your master, that I cannot pretend to offer my advice: perhaps you gave him great provocation, which would tell against you in a court of justice. I should be most happy to assist any honest man, but I am at a loss what to say or do in your case. The law is equally open to both rich and poor; and though not my profession, I might afford you more than advice, if needful."

"You speak like a gentleman," said the tipsy David: "I am a poor, but well-meaning man, and I stand very much in need of advice. I wanted the landlord here to have recommended me to a lawyer, but he was afraid he might be brought into trouble, or put to some expence; though I would have stood between him and all harm; and I have saved enough money to trounce my rogue of a master. I don't wish to fling my hard earnings away, but sure I may have justice done me; but, as you say, you do not know the rights of the matter yet, and as you are inclined

inclined to stand my friend, I will tell you my story, if you are not in haste, or have no objection to my walking a little way with you."

The landlord had been called away before David became thus communicative, and not wishing he should interrupt the Welchman, he said—" A walk will do you no harm; I am going to Clifton; you may accompany me, and I can listen to your tale as we go along."

The flattered David started upon his feet.—" I am rather fresh, to be sure, but as able to walk as if I was quite sober."

They accordingly proceeded together towards Clifton; but ere they had lost sight of the *Nannygoat*, the sign of the house, the Welchman called a halt, asking—" Do you live at Clifton? because I never remember to have seen you in these parts before?"

" No, my friend, I do not; I came thither with an invalid gentleman, whose agent I am: we come from London, but may

may stop some time near Clifton. I scarcely know any body in this neighbourhood; but I am enough of a lawyer to be able to advise in more complex cases than yours is likely to be; and my employer, or principal, will, I am sure, stand your friend, if you prove deserving."

"Why, then, as you speak and promise me so fair, I will tell you my story, which may tire your patience, as I have much to say, and you must not interrupt me, or I shall never make myself clear, since I am not myself at the bottom of every thing. —There is a lady, who would deceive old Nick himself, and there was a lad, who has gone to seek his fortune, who are both concerned in my quarrel with my late master—that is, farmer Griffiths, who, when he lived in Wales, was no better than a labouring man, like myself: his father was an honest, industrious, painstaking man, who kept a little shop, and helped out by teaching an evening school; but he could never ding much into James.

The

The farmer, the elder son, for there were two, was very sharp and cute; he was sent to a grammar school, and came on surprisingly; but my master, that was, turned out a dunce, and was oftener at the public-house than any where else, as he grew up, and was noted for keeping bad company, and being a fighting, bullying chap; but he was good-natured in the main, and not disliked. Ned, the other brother, took too much upon himself, because of his learning, so they were always quarrelling; and as Ned did not get the best of it when they came to fisty cuffs, he went footboy to the rector, who after a time recommended him to the nobleman who had given him the living; and by the time he was five-and-twenty, he became *valet-de-sham* to one of this lord's sons; and as a proof what learning will do for a man, this young lord, who had some high place himself, put his valet into a situation which brought him in more than two hundred a-year. Well, when he became

came so great a man, he came down into Wales to see after his brother. The father had been dead some time, and it was given out that he was going to establish him in a good farm in England, to take him from his pot companions, and that he might not be ashamed to acknowledge the relationship: all this pride and boasting went down with some folks, but others wanted to know how Mr. Griffiths (no longer Ned) came to have so much money to spare. I soon began to smell a rat, as it was no sooner settled that James was to leave Wales, when a lady, the very madam Harland who was at the farm last Tuesday, came to his cottage, and brought the very boy, then a baby, who is gone off; so when she was gone, he told me a rhodomontade tale about this child being his brother's, by some fine lady, and that he was to have the care of it, which would be the making of his fortune; and he would make mine if I would accompany him to England, as his bailiff, or foreman,

as I understood farming so much better than he did. I should not have known much else, for he was merely a higler, and had a cart, and two half-starved horses. But, not to tire you, sir, I shall only say, I accepted of his offers, and we came and took possession of Broomfields, as they call the farm yonder, which had certainly been purchased to place him in, and belongs, I suppose, to his brother; but liars ought to have good memories—as he says it is his: be that as it may, when he is drunk he talks quite at random. I know he swore a terrible oath not to let his wife into all his brother and madam Harland's secrets; and she used, when she was in liquor, to upbraid him for keeping her in the dark, which generally ended in a violent quarrel, and her getting a taste of the horsewhip. However, a mystery there was, and a strange one too, since the farm was remarkably well stocked, the house was well furnished, and Griffiths paid ready money for all he bought. Well, here

here we were in England, eating and drinking of the best, when madam Harland paid us another visit, and they were closeted for an hour or more. If it had not been fear of the horsewhip, mother Griffiths would have been in her tantrums: she did break out when the lady was gone, giving me pretty well to understand she was no better than she should be. Griffiths cursed her long tongue, asking what it was to her, since they were so well paid, and telling me he was very glad the fine madam did not know I was his countryman, as she had stipulated that he was not to bring a person who knew them into England; and he was never to mention her name, and always to address his brother when he had occasion to write; and he seemed as much pleased at having outwitted her, as at being in her secrets. At first the child was to have been his; but this his wife overruled: so it was whispered it was a natural son of his brother, who, being married, kept him at a

distance. Well, so we went on for some years, mother Griffiths now and then saying more than prudence warranted, when she was in her cups; since as it concerned no one, no one inquired who or what William Mansel was, whom she generally called a mischievous bastard; and yet, when drunk, she would declare he was no more Edward Griffiths's child than he was hers: she had ears, and she knew he came from another stock, though he might be madam Harland's.

"These silly remarks mostly led to a quarrel between her and her husband, which generally ended in her vowing to swear the peace against him. Well, so we went on, Griffiths and his wife often jarring about this poor boy, whom every body loved but that drunken woman. By the time he was nine years old, he could turn his hand to any thing. We have a basket-maker in the village, for whom he used now and then to do an odd turn, and he learnt his trade only by looking on,

as

as one may say, with little or no instruction, and soon made the prettiest baskets I ever saw.

" Madam Harland, as they call her, generally came once in six months—as, besides his farm and thereuntos, he was paid for William's board. Well, she often found the child ragged and dirty, which they used to account for by saying, if they made any distinction between him and their own children, they should set folks a-prating; so, though she might not be best pleased, she could not blame them, since she had put herself very much in their power, as no doubt he is her son; and I think Ned Griffiths's master, instead of he, was the father. Altogether it is a very strange business; and surely as those he belonged to could pay so well, he might have been placed in very different hands.

" I think there was deception upon deception, from what I could pick up; but this is talking, like my old mistress, at random: gentle or simple, he was much

more driven about than James and Edward Griffiths; and to do him justice, he never flinched at any thing; he would drive the plough, fetch up the cows—nay, help to milk them, and was, in fact, mother Griffiths's factotum.

But as the old saying has it, when things are at the worst they are sure to mend; as he had but just entered his tenth year when madam Harland made her appearance at the farm very unexpectedly, between eleven and twelve of a Saturday morning, and found him stripped in a ragged shirt, helping me to load a dung-cart. My master was looking on, but did not see madam till she was within a few yards of him. I saw her colour rise the moment she caught sight of William, and her first words were—'Upon my word, Mr. Griffiths, you seem resolved to render William Mansel useful! I should have supposed his time would have been better employed at school'—a broad hint, as I thought, that she paid for his schooling.

"Griffiths

" Griffiths was sorely confused, but did stammer out, he hoped he saw her well, requesting she would walk in; every thing should be explained to her satisfaction. They walked away together, the lady, to my mind, in high dudgeon; and as I was upon the listen, I did hear her say—' Do not tell me! surely I pay enough for clothes and schooling!' William had also opened his ears, but our master prevented our hearing any more, as he turned round to give me some orders; but I saw his blood was up, though he spoke gently, but not much to the purpose.

' Why, David,' cried the arch rogue, the moment he was out of hearing, ' since I am the bastard son of farmer Griffiths's brother, how came that lady to notice me, or my dress? Surely she said something about paying for my clothes and schooling: she cannot be very generous, to judge by my appearance, or my ignorance, for I do but just know great A from a bull's foot.'

" I could have joined in his mirth,

though I felt half confused by his shrewd remark, but merely said, 'that lady is acquainted with Mr. Edward Griffiths, so that may account for her thinking you would be better at school; perhaps she knows he wishes you to be a scholar—nay, she may, by his desire, make the farmer some allowance, and that is what she alluded to.'

'Very likely; and my mistress, as I am desired to call her, has hinted more than once, that this fine lady is my mother; but I know better; my feelings convince me she has no regard for me: she may spend a small sum upon me, but she never noticed me with any appearance of kindness. I cannot say I am surprised she did not offer to shake hands with me just now,' looking and laughing at his dirt and rags: 'so, as you will not tell me who and what I am, why let us finish our job.'

"As I did not choose to make mischief, I merely laughed in my turn. The lady soon

soon took leave, and as she passed, she called William, putting a shilling into his hand, to buy soap were her words, adding —'I desire I may never see you such a dirty figure, or so employed again!' not appearing to have recovered her temper; nor did my master, whose teeth were set, seem much better pleased: indeed, if she wished the boy to suppose himself a Griffiths, she acted very sillily, as he perfectly understood that the hint was meant for the farmer, who walked on with madam, while he chucked the shilling into the air, and catching it again, observed—'I never was so rich before; but I really will buy soap as the lady desired, but it shall not be the common sort. Pray what is her name?'

'You must ask master,' was my reply, who soon returned, after putting madam into her carriage, which had waited at the end of the lane. He looked very sulky, and mother Griffiths, as usual, paid the piper, as they had a fine row. Well, in

the evening, after the boys were gone to bed, I was asked to smoke a pipe with him. None of the other men board in the house. Mistress and him had come to a right understanding, so she joined the party; and I was asked what the boy had said when madam had taken so much notice of him. I repeated the remarks he had made.

'I knew she would set his brains a-trotting: she is no better than a weathercock; first I was to treat him as my own child: she only required he should write and read, as he was to succeed me in this farm, which by good rights should be mine, and so I shall tell her, if she often treats me as she did to-day; and now, forsooth, he is not to be made a slave of, and she expects he should be kept to his school! by-and-by she will want to make a gentleman of him! I wish the devil had had her for coming here to-day: however, as I have told you before, David, she has been my friend, and will remain so, if I humour

humour her fancies; so the boy must go to school with Jem and Ned. You must tell him madam Harland is my landlady, and knows his father, and she has offered to pay for his schooling.'

"Thus it was settled; though when he grew forward, he threw out many hints that he ought to be well paid for doing madam's dirty work; he would make her speak out before he had done with her: if he was thought trust-worthy, why did not she tell him all the truth? Ay, ay, there were wheels within wheels; but he would be at the bottom of every thing before he was much older. I heard all he had to say, but took no notice; and depend upon it, William Mansel is no poor man's son. I told him, as agreed, that he was to go to school with the Griffithses in future—who was to pay, and such like flams; but, Lord bless you! he was not our dupe, and often posed me by his shrewd questions. However, to the village school he now went very frequently,

and from that time he was always decently dressed; but before madam Harland paid us another visit, our parson engaged a new curate, who having occasion to call upon the farmer, who was churchwarden, saw William, who was the only person in the way, mistress not choosing to shew herself in her working dress, and master being from home. Having told him what had brought him, he took a seat: I cannot tell you what passed between him and the boy, but the upshot of the business was, that Mr. Carter, who was, like every body else, mightily taken with him, offered to instruct him gratis, as he had many leisure hours, and could not employ them more to his satisfaction; and as this was likely to prove a saving to Mr. Griffiths, and he should have the handy boy more at home, he snapped at the offer; and when madam Devildom, as he now styled madam Harland, came again, he boasted to me how nicely he had done her out of twenty pounds a-year, to pay the curate, who,

who, to my certain knowledge, never received a farthing, but even kept the boy in pocket-money; and under him he learnt but every thing, gardening, turning, and I cannot tell you what besides, and was an excellent scholar into the bargain. But all this, you will say, has nothing to do with my quarrel with my master."

"I rather think it has, so pray proceed; you cannot be too minute. I can guess you were too frank, or had too good a memory for Mr. Griffiths."

"Be you a witch, sir? for you have hit the right nail on the head. Well, you would have supposed the farmer and his wife would have been pleased to see and hear how well William got on; but, would you believe it? had they dared, they would have prevented his spending so much time with the curate, who had never noticed their sons, whom they were always crying up as far before William. Be that as it may, Mr. Carter never offered to forward them

them in their learning; though it was soon seen what pains he had taken with the orphan boy; for such it now pleased the Griffithses to style him, as they now said his father and mother were dead, and they were his only friends; but somehow, though I never contradicted it, this story never took, which led to continual quarrels between master and mistress, she often wishing they had sent him to the workhouse, since he was now considered so learned and so clever, when compared to her children; while he used to curse her for a fool, and ask her what they should have been but for this boy, who had led to their being settled at Broomfields, and for whose board and education they had always been handsomely paid, declaring, that if she dare to talk so sillily in any body's hearing but mine, he would make her pay pretty dearly for her folly; throwing out other threats and hints, which convince me that they know more than they have

have ever told me; and as they have set me at defiance, let them take the consequence.

" But to go on with my story. By the time William was twelve years old, he had turned such pretty things in wood and ivory, that Mr. Carter shewed some of them to the great squire Arlington, who owns that fine house upon Clifton Hill, and another large one at Bristol; and there William Mansel was soon all-in-all with all the family; he turned tobacco-stoppers for the old gentleman, and crinkum crankams for madam and the young ladies, besides making them baskets, and doing fifty more odd jobs to please them; but the old gentleman is mortal proud, and at last I believe he thought the young chap was too much noticed by his daughters, with whom he had consorted for near two years, on and off; when just before he made himself scarce, there was almost as great a rumpus at the squire's as there has been between master and me. I have heard

heard that he turned or kicked William out of doors; at all events, the young ladies' maid lost her place; she now keeps a shop at the Wells."

"Indeed! do you know I should like to see that young woman: she may be a material evidence in your favour, should you go to law, as she is doubtless perfectly acquainted with William Mansel's story."

"I dare say she knows as much about him as he did himself. I can shew you her shop—we are not far from the Wells."

"Do so, and I will return with you to where we met, as I have much to learn yet, ere I can venture to offer my advice."

David agreed to the justice of his remark, adding—"Squire Arlington need not have been so crusty, for many other gentlefolks noticed William; indeed a finer youth, at the time he left us, never trod in leather. But there is Miss Curtis's shop; I will wait for you on the private path behind the Well House."

"Do so. Sit down and rest yourself—

I dare

I dare say I shall not be long." So saying they separated, as Martin had fully ascertained that David could not direct him to William Mansel's present residence, which he rather hoped to learn from Miss Curtis.

CHAPTER III.

Miss Curtis was curtseying to some ladies as Martin came up, who having seen some watch-ribbons in her window, desired to look at them. The fair shopkeeper produced a great variety. He affected to turn them over, when suddenly raising his eyes, he said, in a gay tone—"I do not think you do me the honour to recollect me, though I am sure I am not mistaken in your person; so pleasing a countenance can never be forgotten. Did not you once live with the Arlington family?"

"I certainly

"I certainly did, sir, for some years; but I cannot say I recollect having seen you during that period. Possibly you may have heard I was discharged in disgrace not four months since?"

"I do not know what meaning you may affix to the word disgrace, but I have been assured the blame all fell upon Mr. Arlington. Pray what has become of that highly-gifted youth, who I understand absconded immediately after the old gentleman had so absurdly exposed himself?"

"Most sincerely do I wish I could satisfy your curiosity, sir," replied the milliner, sighing as she spoke; "since my sweet Miss Ellen cannot be persuaded she has not his death to answer for."

"I never was more shocked, since I had no idea he was dead."

"I did not mean to say he was, sir; indeed, for any thing I know to the contrary, he may be in excellent health. It is only strange that he should never have been heard of since Mr. Arlington, as you truly

truly say, acted so foolishly to tax a baby boy with having seduced a still younger girl's affections. As playfellows, they were intimate; and its unknown the pretty things he made and contrived for the sweet child—for she is no more. Who but such an ill-advised, passionate man, would have thought of love between a lad not fourteen, and a girl barely twelve? His silly pride had taken the alarm, and Miss Anne was jealous to see her sister obtain so many proofs of poor William's ingenuity; well, she has had her revenge, as poor Miss Ellen has never been herself since he has been missing, what with one thing and another. I have to thank Miss Anne for losing my place; she is father's own girl—mean even to avarice, and always prying into what does not concern her; however, no thanks to her, I am better off than ever I was. My parents did not blame me, because Mr. Arlington chose to abuse me; they would not allow me to seek another service, as this

this shop and business was offered them for me, and I have met with the greatest encouragement from many of our first families. Mrs. Arlington has even promised to employ me: she is expected home this evening; I shall be obliged to wait upon her now and then; but I do hope I shall never again set eyes on that worthless old miser, her husband. I rather hope Miss Ellen will look in upon me to-morrow; the housekeeper, who preceded them home to get every thing ready, called upon me last night, and she tells me the old man has received no benefit from the London physicians, since he grows worse and worse, and cannot travel above thirty miles a-day. Well, it is no matter how soon it pleases God to take him, then his wife and Miss Ellen may have a little peace: they both sent me the kindest messages by Mrs. Williamson; nay, even Miss Arlington desired her to tell me she should henceforward deal with me; I am not much obliged to her, as I know she will expect

to

to have every thing dog cheap; however, time may soften her temper. You know the family, I presume, sir, though I cannot recollect where or when I ever saw you before."

Martin was prepared with an answer. He had seen her with the young ladies at Mrs. Swanford's, to whose husband his master had brought letters, acknowledging, to render her more communicative, that he was only a gentleman's gentleman; but mentioned no names.

This rendered her quite familiar; so good a looking man, and in her own sphere, was an acquaintance worth cultivating; she therefore entered into many details respecting the Arlington family, declaring that the old gentleman was the greatest tyrant upon the face of God's earth—"Yes, sir," she proceeded, with tears in her eyes, "he actually stood over Miss Ellen, holding out such bitter threats, while she wrote what he was pleased to dictate to poor William Mansel."

"I have

" I have heard of that letter, which only displayed the old man's pride and folly."

" You speak the truth. What right had he, though he is so rich, to call the poor dear youth an impudent bastard, and to threaten that if he ventured to set foot in his grounds, much more in his house, he would have him taken up for a vagabond and a rogue, and sent to the house of correction? But what was more cruel than all, he obliged poor Miss Ellen to add, that if after the insult she had received from him, if he dare, should they meet by chance, ever to address her again, she would spit in his face, and inform her father of his assurance, who would take care he should suffer for his impudence; and then by way of punishing me, when I was ordered to leave the house, the old bashaw, as we used to call him, having sealed the letter, desired me to deliver it to the worthless wretch whom I had encouraged in his insolence. I made no reply, but left the old man to spit his venom.

Mrs.

Mrs. Arlington was sobbing aloud; I am sure she could not have loved a child of her own better than she did poor William; nay, even the old hunks noticed and praised him, while he was benefiting by his ingenuity; but when he so unfortunately popped upon us, sent by Miss Arlington no doubt, just as William was respectfully saluting Miss Ellen, mercy upon me, how he did rave and storm! he certainly boxed his ears, and even cuffed his frightened daughter; nay, had he dared, he would have horsewhipped him. Now he would not have been so rough, had not Mr. Carter left Westbury; ay, poor William lost a sincere friend in him; however he taught him so many useful things, besides making him an excellent scholar, that he may be said to be master of twenty trades. He understood the management of a garden as well as our gardener; such a beautiful herbal as he made for Miss Ellen! But I should never have done, if I was to dwell upon his talents."

"But

"But what did he say when you gave him this violent letter?"

"Oh, I carried an antidote to the venom it contained; three lines, written in pencil by Miss Ellen, counteracted all the ill effects of the old miser's spleen. I watched for the dear lad in the shady lane leading to Broomfields, and gave him her kind note first, which enabled him to laugh at old surly's anger, declaring he would always keep the letter, because it was written by dear Miss Ellen; adding, 'but for her, I should have turned pretty smartly upon Mr. Arlington; but I agree I was to blame—it certainly was taking a great liberty; and had I not thought I might not see her again of some time (as the family are going to London you know), I should not have so far forgot myself.' He would then have forced a piece of gold upon me, which made me start, as I did not suppose he had a shilling at command. Doubtless either Mr. Carter or a Mr. Rivers, who had spent the summer at Westgrove,

grove, and had greatly noticed him, had made him thus rich; of course, I would not rob him of what he might want, as I told him."

The entrance of some ladies put a stop to the tale; and as Martin thought David might grow impatient, he took his leave, telling Miss Curtis he should do himself the pleasure to look in again before he left the neighbourhood—She should be happy to see him—and thus they parted, Martin taking the path the Welchman had pointed out.

CHAPTER IV.

DAVID was enjoying a comfortable nap under a shady hedge, which did not surprise Martin, who having roused him, merely told him Miss Curtis knew no more of the lad than he seemed to do. His quarrel with Mr. Arlington had merely enabled that gentleman to display his authority very foolishly, though it might have induced this spirited lad to leave Broomfields.—"Miss Curtis mentioned a Mr. Rivers as having greatly noticed him," Martin continued.

"I believe he did; he was a very rich gentleman, who spent two or three months at Westgrove, at the entrance of Westbury; he hired it of the family to whom it belonged; he had no family, and did a power of good in the village; and as he was

was all-in-all with Mr. Carter, that led to his noticing William."

"May not he have provided for him?"

"I never heard such a thing even hinted. Mr. Rivers had been gone a month or more before William started. Some people did say that gentleman had given Mr. Carter a living; but that was contradicted afterwards; besides, if William had been offered any situation, or had been asked to accompany or follow either of those gentlemen, why should he have concealed it? he was so independent in his notions, that half a word would have sufficed to induce him to accept of any situation in which he might have been able to maintain himself."

"Then now do you return to your own story."

"Well, sir, no sooner was Mr. Carter gone, than mother Griffiths began to taunt him with having lost his great friend; she expected he would have made a gentleman of him, and not have left him

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no better than he found him; he must return to the plough, she was of opinion. I used to wonder he took her spite so quietly, as he seldom made her any answer, or if he did, said he should take a turner's shop, or work journeyman till he could set up master.—'You must have my leave first,' Griffiths told him one day. —'He supposed so, and the lady's who paid for him besides. Well, he would ask her to suffer him to relieve her from such a burthen.' This alarmed them very seriously. The farmer requested he would leave every thing to him, since they had hopes they might be able to send him out to India; he must have patience; he had friends, who would provide for him in their own good time. Indeed, master told me, in confidence, madam Harland did talk of sending him abroad; but if she did, she must not think to cut off their allowance, else he would bring an old house about her ears. He had his doubts though, whether she would not be too much

much for him, when his fears were all roused by William's departing, without saying with your leave or by your leave."

"Did he never return to Broomfields after his quarrel with Mr. Arlington?"

"Oh yes; he slept at home that evening; and they never remarked, till after he was missing, that he was unusually dull, and did not eat any supper. The next day was the club feast, and fair at St. George's across the water, which is sure to be attended by all the world and his wife: of course, master James Griffiths never missed a revel, for he was the moral of his father at the same age, and always in rows and mischiefs. Ned is but half saved and very puny, owing, the old women say, to his mother being too fond of gin; he is always dawdling about home; but that does not concern you: he will never earn his bread by wholesome labour, as I have done. James is no fonder of work, and often said he had rather be any thing but a farmer. However, on this

morning he mounted his horse, and set out for the fair, and as neither he nor William appeared at dinner-time, they were supposed to be together. Now as this was a liberty William had never taken before, mother Griffiths was not sparing of her words. The farmer bid her mind her own children; asking me if I had heard the boy say where he was going? I could not say I had; but supposed, wishing to make peace, that he had been over persuaded by James, who I well knew would not return while he had a penny in his pocket, or could get credit for a glass of liquor; but I rather expected to see William before night, but was disappointed; so after much swearing and more scolding, the farmer and his wife went to bed; I sat up till twelve, and then turned in also; and no tidings had reached us of the runaways when we met at breakfast, when we concluded they would not return before evening, as the fair lasts two days, and the second day is the best attended.

tended. James they knew had not more than a dozen shillings in his pocket; but they feared William was better supplied, as Mr. Carter had been very liberal, they suspected, when he took leave of him.

"Now it so happened there was to be a parish meeting that afternoon, or the farmer would have gone in search of them; as it was, he made himself sure they would be home before twelve. When I had done work, I walked over to a neighbour's, whose sons were gone to the fair, hoping to hear something of our boys, if they were returned, as I knew my master would not be home very early, as there was to be a supper after they had done their business, and I saw my mistress was primed before I left home. The young people I had gone to see came home early, and they told me James had been drunk ever since the night before, had sold his horse, and gambled away every shilling of the money, and had finished by enlisting for a soldier, by which means he had

obtained a fresh supply, which they had left him spending in treating the recruiting party, who did not wish to allow him much time for reflection. They had neither seen nor heard of Mansel, and did not believe he had even been at St. George's. I was both surprised and grieved by this intelligence, since where could William have taken himself? As for James, I thought he might stand in a better man's place, since he was only fit to be shot at; still I knew his father would be very sorry; but as I did not seem likely to do any good, my neighbour advised me not to be the first to set about the news; so I returned home, resolving to keep my own council, if my master had not heard what his son had done at the public-house.

"My mistress was asleep in her arm-chair, so I sat up for my master, who did not make it late. His first question was —'Are they come home?'—'I had not seen them,' I replied. He raved and swore most bitterly, declaring he would set

set out in search of them by five the next morning, and would not forget his large horsewhip. I let him vent his rage, well assured that he would not start at the time he mentioned, and I thought I might as well allow him to get sober before I opened my budget; so having assisted madam to bed, I heard no more of either of them, till I returned from the fields about eight o'clock the next morning, when I saw his horse saddled, and hanging at the door. He gave me the meeting, declaring that he almost dreaded seeking them, for fear they had met with some misfortune. I pitied him from my heart, because I knew what was in store for him; yet I dare not tell him what James had done, since he would have blamed me for not repeating what I had heard the over night; and it was every way better that James should make his own story good; and I was half inclined to fear William had been as ill advised—he was such a tall, fine-made youth; I really had my

doubts, so I only hurried my master off, who soon found what a pretty job James had made of it. He did not return till near midnight, as he had followed the recruiting party to another village, and would have bought the drunken sot off, but he swore if he did, he would enlist again before his face. He had sold a horse for twelve pounds, that would have been cheap at double the money, and the man who had bought him had rode him away immediately, so it was no use pursuing a person whom no one knew; and as to William Mansel, he could learn neither tale nor tidings of him; had he found him, James might have gone to the devil his own way, since, if he had not enlisted, he would have been their ruin.

"Well, the mother fretted, Ned chuckled, and the farmer was half mad. At last I assisted to compose a letter for madam Harland, which was sent into Wales for certain; and we supposed, as was natural, that having removed the boy by some artful

ful trick, she would never visit Broomfields again, when, behold you, last Tuesday she made her appearance, and my master and she had a fine blow-up. This he told me in the evening, adding, 'but I gave her as good as she brought. However, as she has long arms, and may stick in my skirts, why I am willing to earn the bribe she has held forth, if we can only discover which way, or with whom, he is gone. Where had we best seek him, David?'

"They were both all but drunk before I was asked to join them, and I certainly told them they might thank themselves for having rendered William desperate, since madam, in particular, was always taunting and teasing him. I had long feared he would take some rash step; and surely they had been well enough paid, to have made it their interest to have treated him kindly. I meant no harm; but they both flew out like tigers.—'They had done their duty by him; he had been more

plague than profit. Who but them would have burthened themselves with other folk's bastards? it had been no credit to them—their good name had suffered by their compliance.' I was thoroughly provoked, and reminded them of what they were before they came to Broomfields, and taxed them with having robbed Mrs. Harland, as they had latterly suffered Mr. Carter to half clothe and feed his pupil. They began to abuse me, daring me to publish all I knew, and calling me every thing but a gentleman. I retorted till I made them wince so much, that they both laid violent hands on me, and as I could not return a woman's blows, I had not much chance between them, as madam, not satisfied with pummelling me with her brawny fists, swore she would knock my brains out, seizing the large poker for that purpose; and if I had not caught up the fender, she was capable of doing so. They now contented themselves with abusing me, ordering me to leave the house; I should

should never darken their doors again, when once they had seen the back of me; they would swear the peace against me. Thus they ran on, till I told them I was as ready to go as they were to turn me out; but I could make them repent having treated so faithful a servant so ill, making for the door, which I had no sooner opened than they both darted upon me. Griffiths kicked me, and she made a blow at me with the poker, which happily fell upon the door-frame: so now, sir, cannot I attack him in law? They certainly assaulted me, and I have it fully in my power to make the village too hot to hold them."

"That may be, but was any one present when they laid violent hands upon you?"

"Not a soul; Ned and the boy were gone to bed, and so were the men who are harvesting there: we had it all to ourselves."

"Then for want of witnesses your complaint

plaint will fall to the ground: but did any one in the house overhear what passed, though they were not present?"

"Yes, sir; John Merrick, the tallest of the men who were persuading me to return with them, was awoke by the noise we made."

"That might be; but did he tell you he heard what passed?"

"No; he declares he thought it was only master horsewhipping his wife. Edward did get up; and having heard the outer door banged to, he remained upon the listen, till finding all quiet, he went to bed again."

"Then depend upon it you would obtain no redress in a court of justice: the husband and wife will make their own story good, as you cannot bring a single witness to contradict them. John Merrick either does not, or will not, know any thing; the son will of course side with his father and mother. You will be accused of beginning the riot; nay, you acknowledge

ledge you endeavoured to aggravate them. Griffiths's character stands fair with his neighbours; he is churchwarden; rents, if he does not possess, a very large farm, and is considered a rich man; therefore his oath will be credited in preference to yours. I am only acting as a friend, by pointing out what must be the result of your going to law. However, for argument sake, we will admit that your statement obtains credit, and that you gain your cause, and a shilling damages; you will be more than twenty pounds out of pocket, and will have made Mrs. Harland, and her unknown friends, your decided enemies. They are, says your master, very powerful, so pray do nothing rashly."

"You certainly talk reason, sir; yet it is very hard to put up with such usage as I have met with. I may bring an old house about my ears, I see that; for my walk, and the nap I took under the hedge, has helped to clear my head; and I have no mind to bestow my hard earnings upon lawyers:

lawyers: yet I should enjoy frightening my rogue of a master."

"That you seem to have done, as both him and his wife are so anxious to make it up with you, and to persuade you to return. Suppose you suffer me to wait upon the farmer in your name; I think I could bring you off with flying colours. I will not spare him; and if he talks big, I will tell him that I will see you righted at any expence."

They were by this time again in sight of the *Nannygoat*. David stopped, scratched his head, then said—"I plainly perceive, sir, that you really mean to stand my friend, so I cannot do better than to suffer you to settle the business. I find I have been too hasty, but please to remember, I was turned out neck and heels."

"You shall have ample satisfaction, so return to the Nannygoat; but do not drink any more, except you take a pint of ale with your meal, as you must be hungry."

"I am

"I am not given to drinking, I can assure you, sir: the landlord enticed me on at first, and I relished his liquor: but please to remember, I do not want to beg myself in again. I shall soon find work: my character will not suffer, whatever theirs may do."

"True; but they were in liquor when they abused you, and you have not been very reasonable in your cups: so adieu for the present: you shall soon see or hear from me again," taking the road to Broomfields, while David entered the public-house.

CHAP-

CHAPTER V.

MARTIN was very glad chance had afforded him an opportunity of visiting Griffiths, particularly now he was so much more acquainted with the connexion subsisting between him and Mrs. Harland, and the lost youth. David was certain the farmer would be at home, as he seldom went out after dinner, except to the club of an evening. As he expected, he found him and his wife just sat down to tea, with their youngest son. Martin being known to be the colonel's valet—nay, almost companion, ensured him a very cordial reception, as farmer Abinger had been loud in his praises of both master and man. Griffiths made him take possession of an arm-chair, and his wife hoped he would take a cup of tea, which he readily accepted,

accepted, feeling in want of some refreshment. After a little general discourse, Martin opened his embassy.—" I am fearful, Mr. Griffiths, you will consider me as a meddling busy-body; but really I could not hear your name called in question, without feeling it my duty to inform you that something unpleasant is in agitation, which certainly may injure your reputation. During my rambles this morning, I fell in with a Welchman, who was very much in liquor, who, I understand, did work for you. Two of his companions were persuading him to return to his duty when I came up, therefore I did not interfere; but having learnt who he was from the landlord of the Goat, when he was left alone, I thought it my duty to point out to him the folly he was guilty of, since your having discharged him (turned him out of doors, he says) was no rule why he should venture to impeach your general character. He entered into a long story in his own defence, which I shall not repeat

peat. He has lived with you some years, I find; and I suppose he forgot himself when you kicked him out, which induced him to hope he might prosecute you for an assault. I have not spared him, and have, I believe, convinced him that the law will afford him no redress. Whether I have been doing you a favour, you are the best judge; but I know how fond people are of listening to scandal; therefore, were I in your place, I would stop his mouth by receiving him again into your house, as it would be very unpleasant even to defend yourself in law: in short, not to keep you in suspense, he has empowered me to wait upon you, and I am in hopes the silly business may be amicably settled."

Griffiths and his wife were all attention while he was speaking, when the farmer affected to talk big, but agreed he had no objection to make the matter up. David was an excellent servant; he had sent the men Mr. Martin had seen to sound him, but

but to them he had sworn he would never return. They did not take the proper means to bring him to his senses, he now perceived; acknowledging, that he had been intrusted with some private concerns, which had rendered him impudent.

Martin agreed that such people were very apt to take advantage of circumstances, but he hoped he had made David sensible of his error.—" Your quarrel, I understand, arose about a lad who has absconded—a natural child of your brother's: and pray, as I asked him, what has the world to do with your or your brother's private concerns? Indeed, I was surprised to hear so many people talking of so simple and common an event. The boy was much liked, and very highly gifted, I understand?"

" He was an impudent young jackanapes, who had been set above himself by a fool of a parson!" cried Mrs. Griffiths; " and I am heartily glad he has taken himself off: my dear sons were not thought worthy

worthy to wipe his shoes: he has driven my poor James to list for a soldier; and there was madam——"

Here the enraged husband stopped her mouth by d——g her for a fool, while he spoke highly of William Mansel, whose strange disappearance he could no way account for.—"I dare say David has told you all he knew respecting him. My brother was certainly the means of his being placed under my care, and he may be his son—for, as I have a soul to be saved, I do not know who he really belongs to."

"Nor I either," obtruded Mrs. Griffiths; "no one can ever be a match for madam ——"

"Do hold your bother!" interrupted the angry farmer: "and as to troubling you, Mr. Martin, with what cannot concern you, why, it would only be taxing your patience; the boy is gone—by whose connivance I cannot pretend to say; somebody must have assisted him with money and advice—perhaps the very lady who pretends

pretends to be so anxious respecting where he is gone, for she would deceive old Nick himself: she pretends to accuse our late curate of having removed him; but that may be merely to blind me; however, if David does but return, we may perhaps trace him out."

"What say you to sending him a trifle of money?" rejoined Martin: "he has been losing his time, and spending more than he can afford, very foolishly. You say he is a good workman, and should he engage with any other master, he may say more than would be pleasant. Excuse my giving you my advice, since I am a mere stranger; but I like to promote peace and quietness: still you are the best judge whether any thing he could say could injure you."

"That I should not mind; but he is so good a farmer, that I shall be greatly at a loss for him; but if he should give out that I had bribed him to return, that might

might tell as much against me as if I was to let him go."

"I think I could so manage as to make it appear that he solicited you to receive him again. Can he write?"

"Yes, and read too, better than I can; he kept all my accounts: indeed, I shall be a serious loser if he does not return; and I can never be sufficiently thankful to you, Mr. Martin, if, as you seem to hope, you can get him in the mind. The men I sent only made bad worse, and Ned there refused to go in search of him. Now mark me, Edward, if you ever speak saucily to him again, I will horsewhip you; so pray, my good sir, make the best terms you can for me, since the sooner his mouth is closed the better. I know farmer Abinger would be glad to engage him; so what shall I give him—not as a bribe—you take me?"

"No, no, merely a compensation for having laid hands upon him. I dare say he

he will not be extravagant in his demands, and I will engage he shall not report whatever you may give him. Shall I return and make the best arrangements the case admits?"

"I shall be for ever bound to pray for you, Mr. Martin: whatever you promise him he shall receive, and the past shall be all forgotten."

Thus authorized, the valet returned to the scarcely less anxious David, who gave him the meeting at the end of the lane, and was easily convinced by his arguments that he would have had no redress in a court of law: he then proceeded to state that the farmer had behaved handsomely, as he had agreed there were faults on both sides; and that as he had been the occasion of his spending some money, he would repay that, and agree that his wages should go on as if he had been at work.

"That was well thought on, sir," replied the delighted Welchman, who promised secrecy, and every thing that was

required: and as we do not wish to enter into any farther details, suffice it to say, that David returned to Broomfields, money in pocket; and the farmer rejoiced that he had so easily secured his secrecy, and retained so good a hand in his service.

CHAPTER VI.

THE colonel was much amused, though very much disappointed, when Martin related how and where he had spent the day: still it was to be expected that this bustle would, in the end, lead to some discovery.

The curate, Mr. Rivers, and the milliner, had all declared that William Mansel was very highly gifted by nature, and had made excellent use of his time; and was it extraordinary? the colonel remarked, since lord Delmont was looked up to as

as one of the first men in England: his excellent temper, and other good qualities, he appeared to have inherited from his mother, since he would not allow himself to doubt of his identity. But then, what had become of him? he was like Griffiths, very much inclined to believe that Mrs. Harland was privy to his removal; possibly she had sent him out to India. Such hopes had been held out to him even by the farmer, and his education had certainly prepared him to move in a higher sphere than his supposed relations.

Having succeeded in duping those most concerned in his fate when a baby, they had had much less trouble in duping Griffiths and his drunken wife. Mrs. Harland, or her lordly protector, thought the farmer had been a sufficient gainer; and though he fancied himself so wise, he had in fact been so much kept in the dark, that, like his man David, he could not threaten them into continuing the allowance they made for his *protégé*. What

would Mrs. Harland care, admitting he blazoned about that William Mansel was her son? She stood in no awe of her husband, and, if required, she would confute any thing such a man could advance: possibly Griffiths had been too exorbitant of late, which might have induced her to remove the lad. If they had sent him to India, his influence with the Company might enable him to trace whither he was gone. Martin only wished they could come to any certainty, as he would readily sail east or west in search of him: he was no longer a child; a youth of such superior talents must be generally noticed.

"Most probably; I will first apply to Mr. Carter; if he remains in ignorance of his destination, he has again been the victim of that artful woman, and his more worthless father, who is only anxious to deprive him of his name and inheritance; and, unfortunately, his power may have enabled him to remove him far beyond my reach. Surely, no punishment that the law

law could devise would be at all in proportion to the crimes of that treacherous pair: yet they have so managed matters, I really fear we shall never bring any thing home to them. I am half inclined to agree with my uncle, who fancies they have familiar spirits at their beck and call, which enable them to peep into futurity; since one would suppose they had been aware, that when I returned, I should take up my abode at Westbury, and should be all anxiety to discover my Emily's son, since they appear to have removed him just in time to prevent my saving them the trouble. You must spirit up the farmer and David, to endeavour to discover the youth: you may hint, if they could but turn the tables upon Mrs. Harland, they should have her at the best; and as they could at all events place all the expence to her account, they need not be sparing of time or money."

Martin promised to encourage them to earn the bribe she held out, perhaps only

for a blind, declaring, that deep as this lady thought herself, they might amongst them overturn her schemes.

The next morning the colonel told his factotum, he should ask their landlord to smoke a segar with him in the evening; he might glean some intelligence from him: he was acquainted with Griffiths, and must have heard of the recent events in his family; indeed, he was surprised he had never, in the course of conversation, mentioned William Mansel, or his having left Westbury.

"He never retails what he considers as village gossip, sir; and I have heard him blame his wife for repeating what he styles scandalous tales; possibly he considered the reports in circulation to come under that denomination."

"He is a sensible man: have you told him that you had made up matters between Griffiths and his man?"

"Yes, sir, I mentioned it last night, while I was at supper."

"Very

"Very well then; that will lead the conversation to William Mansel."

Farmer Abinger, as may be supposed, was much gratified by the colonel's invitation; when having lit his pipe, which he preferred to a segar, the colonel inquired whether Martin had mentioned having acted as peacemaker between a Welch farmer and his Welch man?

"Yes, sir, and I think they are both very much obliged to Mr. Martin: people who commit follies when they are in liquor, generally repent when they are sober. I dare say farmer Griffiths had been too communicative to his man when in his cups, which led to the quarrel. I suppose you have heard from your valet more than I should be able to tell you, respecting a lad who was under the farmer's care, and about whom there has been as many lies told as would lie from here to London. Who, or what he was, nobody knows even now. Mrs. Griffiths disliked him as he grew up, because he was more noticed

than her sons, particularly by our late curate, who was a most clever, ingenious man—never idle, always turning his hand to something when he was not at his studies; and he brought up William to take after him. I only wish, as some people suspect, that the boy may be gone after him, as I am sure Mr. Carter was as fond of him as if he had been his own. This is some of the best rum I ever tasted, sir: you gentlemen that have been abroad generally bring home the best of articles."

The colonel was glad his visitor liked his liquor, exclaiming, that it was the production of the West, not the East Indies.

"There now! some gentlemen would have laughed at my ignorance, instead of setting me right."

"Were you at all acquainted with the Mr. Rivers who resided a short time at Westgrove? I have heard him spoken of very highly."

"He was a very nice gentleman—as free

free and easy as yourself: he was not an Englishman born; he came from Swisserland originally, and had been in business in Russia; he came to England to settle some long-standing accounts, his men told me, as he had correspondents every where; but he either has, or meant to retire from business entirely: he took much notice of William Mansel, who was certainly a prodigy for his years. I was no judge of his book learning, but from what I have heard from those who were, I only wish my boys may ever be as wise: but there was not a better gardener in the place; he knew the names and properties of every plant that grew: he gave my boys peg-tops of his own turning; baskets to hold their fishing-tackle. Bless him! he could turn his hand to any thing, and was ever ready to teach others: yet that cross-grained mother Griffiths could hardly give him a civil word."

"I am surprised so clever and well-informed a youth was suffered to remain under the care of such ignorant people;

and some lady, David told my man, used to pay for his board and schooling."

"So I have heard, sir; but really there have been so many strange stories told about this lady and William, that I have of late turned a deaf ear to them. I only hope poor William has fallen upon his feet; he can get his own living any where."

The colonel was therefore not sorry to find himself again *tête-à-tête* with his devoted Martin, as his landlord was too prudent to give utterance to his own thoughts upon the subject, and really too ignorant to afford him any additional information. To Mr. Carter he now looked up as the only likely person (if Mrs. Harland was not privy to William's disappearance) to afford him any intelligence of the fugitive. He might also apply to Mr. Rivers; but Martin had heard he had left England: since before he troubled the India directors, he should like to know rather more respecting this Mansel; if they could but trace

trace his route, a great point would be gained: he would write all he had learned to Mr. Edward Harland. Martin should relate every incident at all likely to elucidate this mysterious business. Such were his determinations when he rose next morning; and he was telling his valet what he wished him to do, when the groom returned from the post-office with the daily papers, and a letter from the baronet. Having heard from him the day before, he was surprised at his writing again so soon: instantly breaking the seal, he merely found three lines, to inform him that Mr. Harland had written him to inquire the colonel's direction; he therefore thought it right to apprize him of that gentleman's arrival in England, who would probably either write him or visit him immediately, as he had sent him his direction, adding—" I hope his arrival will not induce you to embroil yourself with lord Delmont, by seconding his schemes or views. If he chooses to assert his nephew's

rights, pray do not interfere in the business; you may do harm, and cannot forward his designs: he has a natural claim upon the youth: you will only be deemed an officious meddler, and may derange all his plans."

The colonel smiled at his uncle's fears, since he instantly resolved to leave every thing to Mr. Harland, as he dreaded, even more than the baronet, giving the world reason to suppose he had a natural claim upon lord Delmont's son: probably he should hear from Mr. Harland the next day—regretting his uncle had not given him his address, as he could have invited him to Westbury, which he thought he ought to visit as soon as possible, feeling assured that his friend and relative would be even more anxious than he was to trace William Mansel's route, if, like him, he supposed him to be his sister's son. He had formed a very high opinion of Edward Harland's heart and principles; still, as they had never met, he did not know whether he

he would improve upon a more intimate acquaintance. His letters were those of a sincere and kind friend, who had, from their earliest connexion, been much more inclined to find excuses for both him and his sister, than to expatiate upon their errors; and he knew he was even more anxious than himself to punish the unprincipled authors of their joint errors, which he hoped had been forgiven by the Fountain of all mercy.

CHAPTER VII.

EARLY the next morning, the colonel dispatched his groom for letters; but ere he returned, Mr. Harland stopped at farmer Abinger's door. The meeting proved a severe trial to both their feelings; indeed for some minutes neither were able to speak, till having cordially returned

ed the worthy merchant's fervent shake of the hand, the colonel faltered out—"How greatly you resemble her, whose loss I must ever deplore!"

"Then you must consider me as her representative, since she long since prepossessed me in your favour. But to have done with the past, let us consider how we can best fulfil her last wishes."

"My anxiety to do so brought me to England sooner than I had intended."

"And I may say the same. Heaven knows I hate no one; but I shall not feel happy till I have brought that popular idol earl Delmont to repentance. Hitherto he has carried all before him; and assisted as he is by that wretch Mrs. Harland, I would not say he may not baffle us yet."

"They really seem to receive the benefit of supernatural assistance, as I have every reason to believe that the child, for whom my Emily mourned, was placed by that vile woman with a farmer, who resides

sides within two miles of this village, from whence he mysteriously departed very soon after my return to England. But I will enter into every detail; let us only trace his route, and then we may set her at defiance," relating every thing that had occurred since he had been at Westbury.

"You have thrown a great deal of light upon the subject; the evidence you can produce may be of material service in the suit I mean forthwith to institute against the earl: Mrs. Harland shall prove who William Mansel really was. My late father's deed of gift in favour of his son, will enable me to attack the great man with every prospect of success, since he shall either refund the money, or produce the boy. My sister very properly made you her heir; and as he affects to suppose his son is dead, we will make him prove his words. I know you are rather averse to our having recourse to law, but we have no other resource, and it is our duty to unmask the titled villain: I rather expect he will propose

pose terms when he learns our intentions, since he cannot hope, even assisted by his wretched accomplice, to make an honourable stand."

"Only let him give up the boy; he may be happier as your *protégé*, or mine, than he ever will be as the acknowledged son of such a father; I should really dread other means would be devised to put him out of the way, should we force him to do him justice."

"These are future considerations; so, for the present, we will suffer the precious pair to remain in their imaginary security, as I waited upon you, my dear colonel, to request you would accompany me into Wales, where I do hope we may make some further discoveries propitious to our views—the shortest delay may be of serious consequence. My elder brother has, you know, been long a resident there, and was, according to your valet's account, very ill more than two months since: well, this poor unfortunate hen-pecked being

ing has contrived to transmit me a few lines now and then; and as he greatly assisted some of my schemes, and his wife kept him very short of money, I have privately supplied him with small sums, which I am afraid he has expended in liquor; therefore I may have hastened his dissolution. Some months since he wrote me, in answer to some queries of mine, a long letter, and concluded by assuring me he should not live long, expressing a most anxious wish to see me, as much upon my account as his own. In reply, I promised to revisit England immediately, desiring I might find a few lines at my banker's as last week, by which time I hoped to reach London. He complied with my wishes, and the medical man who attends him, under cover to whom I directed my answers, added a postscript, unknown to Augustus, which convinces me I have no time to lose, if I wish to see him alive, as he represents him to be in the last stage of a dropsy; and as this letter was written a fortnight

fortnight since, I am all anxiety to be upon the road, since he hints that he has most urgent reasons for wishing to see me before he dies. Now, as I am assured that he has made many discoveries which may be of material service to our cause, who can be so proper a witness as yourself, colonel, since you feel so kindly interested in the concerns and future welfare of our Emily's son?"

"I am at your orders. But should his vixen of a wife be at home?"

"You shall storm the castle," interrupted Mr. Harland.

"I meant to observe, that we should not gain admittance by fair means, should she entertain an idea of who we are."

"I can swear I was summoned by my brother; let her refuse to open the door at her peril! we shall be justified in forcing our way in."

The colonel, who had devoted a few minutes to reflection, observed—"Her hasty journey to London might have a double

double motive; she could not, for shame, have left home, had she returned thither and found her husband dangerously ill."

"She may affect ignorance of his situation, since I suspect she is still in London. I hope I have guessed right, as I had much rather have her room than her company at Eskdale, since her absence would afford the poor invalid an opportunity of communicating many circumstances, which it imports us to be fully acquainted with, to be able to cope with her and her *honourable* cousin."

"Then suppose we step into the Welch mail, which will pass this door in another hour, admitting they have room; it will set us down within an easy stage of Eskdale."

"A most excellent plan," replied the gratified merchant, who was much flattered by the colonel's ready acquiescence.

Martin received orders to prepare for their departure, as he was of course to accompany

company them, since his master fancied he might be of great service to him. Mr. Harland had also formed a very high opinion of his talents, and was much pleased to find him so zealous in his nephew's cause. A neat little luncheon was soon placed upon the table, and they had but just finished their meal, when the coach came in sight, and they were so fortunate as to have the inside to themselves, Martin making the third, as there was no room outside.

During their journey, the valet repeated all he had been able to glean during his first tour; and the gentlemen agreed that no precaution seemed to have been omitted to mislead those who might feel interested in the fate of the young Marcus. Mr. Harland was particularly amused by the great earl having suffered a shopboy to discover who he was; he was even surprised at Mrs. Harland being known under her real name to Griffiths; yet she seemed to have

have kept him as much in the dark respecting the real origin of William Mansel, as farmer Abinger remained.

"Well, only let us find Mansel," said the colonel, "then I think we shall oblige her to declare who he is."

"I hope we shall, since I do not else foresee how we shall establish his claims."

"The evidence of Griffiths and his man David, will oblige her to speak the truth," replied the colonel.

"I think so; but we must not be too sanguine; remember what a deep politician the earl is; and you are well aware that Mrs. Harland will be his, not our friend; I entertain an intuitive dread of this plotting pair."

The colonel agreed that theirs might prove an Herculean task; but if they did gain any information from Augustus, they might perhaps foil them at their own weapons. Thus discoursing, they reached Cardiff about two in the morning, where it became necessary for them to take a different

ferent road; they therefore devoted a few hours to repose, and after breakfast the next morning pursued their journey to Eskdale.

CHAPTER VIII.

THEY reached the castellated mansion about two o'clock. An elderly Welch-woman came to the door, who, the moment she caught sight of them, exclaimed in evident surprise—"I thought it was my lady."

"Your lady!" said the merchant; "does not Mr. and Mrs. Harland live here?"

"Yes, sure, and I thought this chaise had brought madam, my lady, as I call her; though I was surprised she had returned so soon. What did you please to want, gentlemen?"

"To see your master, since your lady is

is not at home," rejoined the merchant, alighting while he spoke.

The old woman's alarm evidently increased, while she faltered out—" You can't come in here, gentlemen, while my lady is from home; she is gone to London to get the best advice for her husband, who is too ill to receive his friends, much less strangers."

" I dare say he has no wish to see strangers. But suppose we are come to endeavour to afford him the relief he stands so much in need of, you will not in that case refuse us admittance?"

" Have you a letter from my lady? if not, you shall not enter these doors," retreating towards the house while speaking.

The colonel, who had not yet spoken, foreseeing that she meant to lock and bar them out, pushed past her, and entered the house. The disconcerted matron all but screamed; while the colonel exclaimed, in the military phrase—" Forward!"

The

The dame had hastened after him, her Welch blood having all risen to her cheeks, while her eyes seemed ready to start out of her head.—" Do you mean to rob the house?"

" No," coolly replied the colonel, " nor to ravish you; so please to shew us the way to your master's room."

" You had better go about your business! I shall not disobey my lady's orders, which were not to suffer my master to be disturbed, and only to admit his own doctor to see him; therefore go forward at your peril, as my screams will soon bring a nest of hornets about your ears, when you may repent your rashness, since pray who and what are you, as you do not come from my lady?"

The gentlemen were amused by the old woman's fury and threats. Mr. Harland desired her to cease to annoy them with her prate, and to shew them to her master.

" And if you are not so inclined, we will

will seek him out to save you trouble," rejoined the colonel.

She placed herself before him, to prevent his advancing towards the staircase. He gently shoved her on one side, when she set up a shrill scream; but no one appearing, the gentlemen began to ascend what appeared the principal staircase.

At the moment, some one from above called out in a feeble voice—"What is all that noise and squalling about?"

"Why thieves, for what I know, have forced themselves into the house, sir, to murder and rob us," again screaming "thieves! murder!"

The gentlemen having now appeared in sight of the invalid, who was looking over the banisters, he exclaimed in a tremulous but joyful accent—"Surely my eyes do not deceive me—'tis my dear brother!"

A silent embrace was the merchant's reply, who had hastened forward the moment the invalid spoke.

The colonel proceeded more deliberate-

ly; the old woman following, and muttering—"Thank God, I am not to blame! I have only done my duty. A brother, forsooth! I never knew my master had a brother; and madam need not have been so close; but who knows but it may be all a take in? Oh, why was not my dear lady at home! But mayhap these brothers would not have come then; I have long thought all was not fair and aboveboard; ay, ay, they have but one more to cheat those that deceive me; I told my lady spots of ink could not fall from the ceiling!"

"Take care, wise dame, you do not commit yourself," said the colonel, who having reached a long gallery, turned towards her; "I am a witness, from your own acknowledgment, that you have been placed as a spy over Mr. Harland."

"She has indeed, sir," said the invalid, gasping for breath while he spoke. "I only wonder you were able to force your way to me; I am quite at her mercy, since I have

I have been unable to go up and down stairs; indeed I made a great effort to get thus far upon hearing her screams. Who is this gentleman, Edward?"

"A near relation. Let me assist you back to your room; I will then enter into every detail you may require."

The invalid took the hint, and the colonel closed the door in the old woman's face, who bawled out—"I defy you to accuse me of having done wrong! I have only obeyed my lady's orders: when a man cannot help himself, he should have somebody about him, to prevent his being imposed upon; so pray do not tell any lies of me, sir. It is not so pleasant an office to nurse a peevish sick man."

No one made any reply to her insolence; but having reached the further end of a very large bedchamber, Mr. Edward Harland entered into every promised detail, having first placed the poor but now humble invalid in his arm-chair, who declared, though his breathing seemed dreadfully

 oppressed,

oppressed, that he had never been so happy since he had taken up his abode at Eskdale, hoping it would please God to spare him for a few days, when he should resign his life with pleasure.

His worthy brother said every thing likely to console him, and to fortify his mind for what must be the speedy termination of his sufferings, when the insolent old woman knocked vehemently at the door, calling out with the voice of a Stentor—" Here is doctor Price! I suppose he may come in, though I am shut out!"

" He is the only real friend I have had in Wales."

" I know all you would say," rejoined his brother, opening the door to a good-looking, pleasant, elderly man, who had written the postscript to his (Mr. Harland's) last letter; he was therefore aware how much they were both obliged to him.

The old gentleman seemed more gratified than surprised at finding his patient with company, who mentioned the names

of

of his visitors, adding—" I have to thank you, doctor, for having procured me this pleasure; my brother's presence has proved a real cordial to my sinking frame and depressed spirits."

" I am happy to hear you say so; but you must not talk so much; the most agreeable surprises are apt to hurry the spirits."

" Joy seldom kills, doctor, and I think seeing my brother is more likely to prolong than to shorten my existence; however, I can now truly say, God's will be done, since my fervent prayers have been granted, and I have once more seen my brother! still I have no objection to take something to cheer my spirits, as I assure you I have taken very little since you were here yesterday, for the best of all possible reasons—I am wholly dependent upon mother Gwynne's pleasure, who cried murder and thieves when these gentlemen forced their way past her, not

choosing to admit any one but you to see me."

"She may fancy she is doing right in obeying the orders of her mistress, who may wish to prevent some of your former associates from disturbing you, or bringing you *forbidden fruit*—you understand me."

"You are always inclined to find excuses for them both; now I say and think, as my precious wife certainly prevented Gwynne from being hanged, she is ready in return to starve me to death, or to get rid of me by any other means, by way of displaying her gratitude."

Doctor Price again recommended silence, looking towards the door.

"I hope she heard me; she knows my opinion of her; but she is too hardened to mend."

"If you will allow, Mr. Harland, I will explain to your friends why you are so prejudiced against this old woman; indeed,

deed, many people agree with you; but as she has been acquitted by a magistrate, we ought to believe her innocent of the crime laid to her charge; and I have often cautioned you not to afford her an opportunity to sue you for defamation."

"Now I think, doctor, I might venture to speak my mind more freely than ever," extending his swollen legs; "but you may relate what has made her so subservient to my wife. Had she met with her deserts, she would never have tormented me; I often tell her she would, had I been a Catholic, have given me a foretaste of purgatory."

As Mr. Edward Harland and the colonel seemed anxious to hear the doctor's promised story, he thus began:—Gwynne, the husband of the woman who treated you so civilly, gentlemen, was a thatcher by trade, and he was one day securing a neighbour's stack, when his wife went to call him to dinner. They were considered a very miserable couple, and had, it ap-

peared in evidence, been quarrelling at breakfast; she said something provoking because he did not come down the moment she called him; the poor man retorted from above, till, somehow or other, he fell from a great height, and did not survive the accident more than a quarter of an hour. Those about him understood that he accused his wife of having shaken the ladder, and occasioned his death; and there certainly were two young people who saw her seize the ladder, threatening to shake him down; but when she was taken before a magistrate, previous, as it was supposed, to her being committed to gaol, Mrs. Harland appeared in her behalf; she happened to be passing at the time the accident happened, and some folks said she did not spare her then; be that as it may, she now declared upon oath, that a large hog had got his head through the bottom round of the ladder, which had induced Mrs. Gwynne, who saw her husband's danger, to seize the ladder, to save him

him from the very fall she had, she feared, unintentionally accelerated; and as there certainly were some hogs routing under the stack, and a lady of such consequence having thus exonerated her from any evil intentions, the justice cannot be blamed for having leaned to the side of mercy. I agree that people did not in general think she had met with her deserts; Mrs. Harland, of course, believed her innocent, which led to her taking her into her service."

Neither the colonel nor the merchant made any remark; but the looks and gestures of the invalid gave them plainly to understand that he thought Gwynne guilty.

When the doctor rose to depart, Mr. Edward Harland accompanied him into the gallery, where they caught sight of Gwynne, who was making a hasty retreat from the door.—" Listeners," observed Mr. Price, " are seldom exposed to flattery." He then told the merchant he was

rejoiced to see him at Eskdale, since no cordial could have been so reviving to the invalid as his presence.

Mr. Edward was no less polite, thanking him for the kind attention he had paid his brother, presenting him with a twenty-pound note, while he inquired his real opinion of his patient.

"I am only surprised, sir, he has lingered so long; indeed I am inclined to believe that worthless old woman has very unintentionally seconded my endeavours to prolong his existence. I was very much surprised at Mrs. Harland's leaving home, considering the precarious situation of her husband. She pleaded indispensable business to me as the cause of her visiting London; but Mr. Harland declares she could have nothing of moment to call her from home; indeed, like me, he seems to believe she is never at a loss for excuses to please herself; she is perfect mistress, and would certainly, had she been aware of the circumstance, have

prevented

prevented him from corresponding even with you, which lowered her so much in my esteem, that I readily assisted in deceiving her. He could not now, were he so inclined, resume his authority over her. She is expected home to-morrow, Gwynne told me. I hope you mean to wait her arrival, and during her absence, pray ask your brother whether he has not some papers he wished to place in your hands; he has given me some hints to that effect during the few moments we have been left alone; nay, he has, I believe, taken the precaution to place them out of his wife's or Gwynne's way; indeed he has directed me to a closet upon the next floor, where I was to find a parcel addressed to you, admitting he had not lived to receive your visit."

"I feel much obliged by your information, sir, and shall certainly not leave the castle while my brother lives, disagreeable as I should feel it to reside under the same roof with Mrs. Harland, of whom I enter-

tain even a worse opinion than you do. You will pay us an early visit to-morrow?"

This Mr. Price promised, taking a polite leave of the generous merchant, who rejoined his brother and colonel Murray.

CHAPTER IX.

Augustus, who, notwithstanding the shortness of his breath and many increasing unpleasant symptoms, declared himself much better and quite comfortable, entered into a variety of details, which certainly did not induce either his brother or the colonel to alter their opinion of Mrs. Harland. Possibly he would have been still more communicative, as he more than once reverted to subjects upon which he had written to his brother, if the merchant had not requested he would not exhaust himself. He should enter into every detail

detail respecting their past correspondence to colonel Murray, agreeing that lord Delmont had rendered him, though unknowingly, as subservient to his nefarious schemes as even *cousin Jane* had proved. —" I should die satisfied if I could but hope that base plotter, who is considered by many people as more than mortal, would be held up to the public in his proper colours: he was my ruin, while pretending to have my interest solely in view: he led to my marrying his artful accomplice, which placed me completely in his toils, till I had left myself no other alternative than to take up my abode here, or to become a prisoner for life. As to the stewardship, that was performed by Mrs. Harland, who has doubtless made him pay pretty handsomely for her complaisance; however, mark me, brother, she will return to her original poverty before she dies. No longer pipe, no longer dance, is lord Delmont's motto; and when she ceases to minister to his pleasures, or be able to ren-

der

der herself useful to his nefarious plans, she will be laid upon the shelf, and must sink to her former insignificance. Well, I forgive her, since she will be amply punished by him to whom she has long devoted both body and soul: like the tempter of old, he will at last deceive her."

Mr. Harland was unable to stop him from running on; and the colonel hoped he would prove a true prophet. He now requested his dear friends, as he styled his visitors, to lead him up the next flight of stairs, while he was able to move, and still retained his few senses, which had never proved of much use to him, adding—"I have concealed some papers which are intended for you, and I cannot direct you where to find them; nor could I ascend the stairs alone; and should my Argus be upon the look-out, she might offer to assist me to tumble from the top to the bottom; since, take my word for it, she occasioned her husband's fall; therefore, pray do not leave me any longer at her mercy, since

since short as my time must be, I dread having my death accelerated by her violence. Price wished to have drawn off the water, but mine appeared such a hopeless case, I would not submit to the operation."

His brother readily agreed to his proposal of seeking the packet, supporting him under one arm, while the colonel supported him on the other side, when so great was his dread of Gwynne, that he begged they would step and move very cautiously; if she was below she would not hear them, but if she was upon the listen, ten to one but she would join them; and as his companions were equally averse to exciting her curiosity, they all but carried the almost-breathless invalid between them, till they reached a dark closet, in which, behind some lumber, was concealed the promised packet, which he gave his brother.—"That contains all the information I can give you respecting poor Emily's son. Do not break the seals while I live;

live; and let us now dismiss the subject, since I believe, as Price said, I have exerted myself too much."

The merchant declared he would condemn him to a couple of hours' silence, assisting to carry him down again, and to place him in his arm-chair, when he pointed to a cordial medicine, some of which greatly revived him. It so happened that Gwynne was by no means aware of their private expedition, Martin having attacked her, when she hastened down to avoid being caught listening, desiring to know what she meant to give the gentlemen for dinner, as they had travelled more than thirty miles that morning without taking any refreshment—"so what can you give us?"

"Scalding brimstone, if I had my good will, you impudent jackanapes!" was the retort courteous.

"We do not want to deprive you of your favourite food," gaily returned Martin; "so think of something else; time wears,

wears, and you will be called upon before you are ready."

"If your masters have no food till I dress them any, they may proclaim a fast. My master dined at one."

Martin's attention was called from her insolence to that of her fellow-servant, who was grossly abusing the postilion, who had remained in waiting, for having made free with an adjacent haystack to recruit the spirits of his jaded beasts. Gwynne joined the old man, declaring the house would be turned out of windows between master and men.

Martin, hardly knowing how to proceed, sought his master, to receive farther instructions. Having knocked, he was admitted into the room, and related what had passed between him and Gwynne, not omitting the quarrel between the gardener and the postilion.

"You see what an insolent jade she is," said the now-exhausted invalid. "I certainly, as she says, have dined; that is, she

she brought me up some stewed knuckle of veal, which was so sour I was unable to swallow a morsel: yet I dare say there is something in the larder, as *my lady* is expected so soon. Search the pantry, Mr. Martin; should it be empty, there is a neat little inn at the entrance of the village, where you may procure something these gentlemen can eat."

The colonel, who felt even more provoked than the merchant with this insolent woman, who was evidently trying to starve her patient to death, followed Martin into the gallery, where he briefly repeated what he had learnt from Price, desiring him to be upon his guard, as she was capable of poisoning them all, in her rage at having been obliged to admit them.

Martin, whose sentiments perfectly coincided with his master's, went down again, resolved to probe the wretched woman to the quick.—"Why, madam cook," he cried, meeting her in the hall, "your master

ter tells me you have some stewed veal in the house!"

"He is mighty wise; there certainly was some; but when I had dined, I gave the remainder to the dogs."

"Have not you made a mistake? did not you give it to the hogs? You know you ought to be very kind to those animals."

"What do you mean, fellow?"

"That you are capable of saying or swearing any thing; for instance, you would as soon have sworn that the hog ran up the ladder, as that he ran his head between the rounds. Do I speak plain? I see you do not recollect the magistrate's clerk: however, I cannot blame you; my memory is not so treacherous. I knew you again the moment I saw you; therefore I do say you ought to be very generous to the pigs: in your place, I should have forsworn eating pork: you are not so grateful towards the preservers of your life; so now let's see what you have in the

the larder, since you must remember I stood your friend when you so narrowly escaped dancing in the air."

Martin might have gone on for another hour, so much was the old woman taken by surprise; her Welch blood, heated as it had been, all forsook her cheeks; her pallid lips visibly quivered, and drops of perspiration started from every pore. Martin felt a degree of pity for the wretched, and, to all appearance, guilty wretch. By way of affording her time to recover herself, he went and discharged the postilion, as the gentlemen had decided not to leave Eskdale for the present. No one had heard what had passed between him and Gwynne, who remained in the hall, leaning against the banisters for support. —"Now, dame," he exclaimed, "as I have dismissed the chaise, you must not only provide a dinner, but prepare beds, since it is very uncertain how long we may remain here—perhaps a month; it depends upon circumstances."

"I am

"I am sure, sir, I have no right to say you nay. I may have done wrong, when I thought I was only fulfilling my duty: to be sure my master has a very great right to receive his relations; yet they might have prepared him and me for their visit. My lady, I am sure, expected no such visitors, since she would have been at home to have received them, or would have left very different instructions with me. I never was more at a loss respecting both dinner and beds: I must consult with my master, poor dear soul! it is almost a miracle you found him alive."

"Quite a miracle, I think, considering how he has been nursed: take care you have not his death to answer for, as well as some other people's—you understand me! He told his brother, in my hearing, you carried him some stewed veal for his dinner, which was as sour as verjuice; and as a proof of the truth of his assertion, you acknowledge to have given it to the dogs. Now, I have only seen one of the

the canine species about the premises, though there are plenty of hogs; but since it is so surprising that your master should still be alive, pray, knowing his danger, how came your *lady* to leave home for any length of time? It certainly shews her to be a woman of great feeling: should Mr. Harland die while we are here, I dare say his brother (for my master is related to him by marriage) will insist upon calling a coroner's jury, to inquire into the conduct of both you and your mistress, who cannot plead poverty for having denied him common necessaries, since Mr. Edward Harland, or my master, had she applied to them, would have amply provided for all his wants."

These implied threats only increased Mrs. Gwynne's perturbation; a violent burst of tears somewhat relieved her, when she sobbed out—"She was only a servant; she had thought it was her duty to abide by her lady's instructions; and had she suffered any of her master's drunken associates

sociates to see him, he would never have been sober: even doctor Price had forbid their being admitted, and how was she to know that the gentlemen were his brothers?"

"I wish that excuse may serve your turn; and certainly if you can swear that it was by Mrs. Harland's orders you offered your dying master food a man in health could not have tasted, you may merely be considered as wholly devoid of feeling; but as these are matters which do not concern me, reserve your excuses and defence till properly called upon, and let me examine your larder: the gentlemen will pay for their dinner, rather than lie under any obligation to Mrs. Harland."

"I am very ready to shew you the way, sir: there is only a chicken in the house, which I killed this morning, to be in readinesss when my lady returns, which I am sure she will do to-morrow, or next day at farthest: business of great consequence obliged her to leave home, or I should

should not have been in such a quandary." They had by this time reached an excellent larder, where hung the chicken, and the best part of a loin of mutton.—" That meat I bought for me and the gardener; besides, the girl who assists me is allowed her victuals: indeed, we servants seldom indulge in fresh meat; for no one can be more frugal than myself: we chiefly live upon pickled pork."

" I did not suppose Mrs. Harland had been so stingy," was the reply; " indeed, all things considered, it is cruel to oblige you always to bear your narrow escape in mind. But where is your brine-tub, as my master and Mr. Harland have not the same reasons for disliking pig-meat? This looks a nice piece," dragging it out; " this with the chicken will make a very good shift. I shall be satisfied with a chop: so where is the girl you mentioned—or shall I go and make up the fire while you prepare the fowl for the spit?"

" Kate is weeding in the garden; but I will

will call her; I should be very sorry to trouble you, sir."

"What is this?" said Martin, interrupting her apologies, and uncovering an old tureen.

"Bless me, I really thought it was all gone!" cried the confused Gwynne.

"Oh, I see what it is!" replied Martin, spitting out the mouthful he had taken; "this is the stewed veal which you told me you had given to the pigs—no, I recollect it was to the house-dog you had been so bountiful—no matter which: I will take care my master shall see the food you set before yours: I dare say it would have been offered him again to-morrow. I tell you what, Mrs. Gwynne, nothing seems to have been a warning to you: I wish you would recollect that the gallows once all but hung over you."

"For God sake, sir, do not reproach me so cruelly!" giving way to a second burst of tears; "you had better kill me outright. I am all of a shake, I declare;

I shall never be able to draw the fowl, much less to roast it. I had really forgotten that nasty stew: pray let me now give it to Argus, our dog."

"Better, as I told you before, remember your obligations to the hogs: if you are but willing to attend to my master's and Mr. Harland's wants, I will cease to remind you of the past. Have you any good malt liquor in the house?"

"Very good indeed, sir, as I dare say my master has told you; he has chiefly lived upon it of late."

"There I believe you, to judge by the veal of what he had to eat; but I dare say you stinted him in ale."

"I was ordered by doctor Price, sir, only to allow him a certain quantity, and I merely conformed to his wishes."

"Because they coincided with your own, and you reserved the more for your own drinking: let me taste your beer, that I may procure some other, should it resemble your stew."

"There

"There is the key of the cellar: you must turn to the left at the end of that passage; a short flight of steps will lead you to the door: there is a small mug standing upon the barrel that is in tap: I always draw the beer myself, as Kate is not to be depended upon; and if I suffered Morgan to have the key, he would never be sober."

"You seem to have all your eyeteeth about you," turning from her, when a small wire cover caught his eye, which might have escaped his notice, had not Mrs. Gwynne endeavoured, by shoving it into a corner, to prevent its being seen: "you had better call the girl; the fire must require making up." He said this hoping she would leave him alone.

There was no need; the fire had not got low; she could easily rear it herself: awkward girls were more hinderance than assistance.—"You will find a mug upon the barrel."

"This shall not serve your turn,"

thought Martin, instantly raising the wire cover which concealed a very tolerable sized pie.—"Has this turned sour by keeping?—no, faith, it is hardly cold!"

"Really, sir, you will have your nose and your fingers in every thing: talk of women's curiosity indeed! but the pie was made to-day: we have a cottage oven, which is very handy. I intended to have sent it to table after the chicken and pork: 'tis an apricot pie: our trees require thinning. I made it for my lady, but it must now serve my master's guests; indeed, altogether, they will not have much reason to complain."

Martin, who had been highly amused by this forced explanation, proceeded to the cellar, and having found the ale very good, told Gwynne, when he returned, she did right to reserve it for her own drinking. Had she the key of the wine cellar?

That her lady always kept herself; but possibly her master had a little gin, or whiskey,

whiskey, hoarded up; if not, they could procure some brandy at the village ale-house.

This Martin went and purchased, and then went to inquire where the gentlemen would choose to dine, who desired the cloth might be laid in the dressing-room, adjoining the invalid's apartment, who would be supported thither: and as Martin related all that had passed between him and Mrs. Gwynne since he had seen the party, the poor sufferer was so amused by his having so completely turned the tables upon her, he laughed till his faltering breath nearly forsook him, and when able to speak, declared he "wished it had pleased God to have taken him in his merry mood; at all events, he should now relinquish life without a murmur."

CHAPTER X.

THE dinner far surpassed the expectations of our gentlemen: the ale they pronounced excellent; nor were the spirits bad: and as the invalid eat a mouthful of chicken, they were not inclined to regret the want of wine and fruit.

Martin having taken away, and made his own dinner upon a chop, now inquired what beds were aired. The one her lady always slept in was ready, and she could easily prepare another in the adjoining apartment; a pan of coals would remove any damp. The colonel and Mr. Harland were therefore consulted, and it was finally settled, that the former should occupy *my lady's* room—the latter declaring his intention of reposing upon a sort of camp-bed in the dressing-room. As the

the invalid seemed much exhausted, and very heavy, owing to his unusual exertions, Martin gave in his report to the housekeeper, who made no objection to any proposal of these relations; and before tea the valet was upon almost familiar terms with the shrew, whom he had so completely tamed. Upon his inquiring which was the nearest and the best road to London, she asked which road they had come to Eskdale?

Martin told her they had crossed the New Passage.

That was the nearest, and some people who did not dislike the water, gave it the preference: her lady always went through Gloucester, as she had friends in that city, where she sometimes spent a month or six weeks at a time.

"Leaving her husband to amuse himself in Wales: very kind and considerate!"

Mrs. Gwynne told him, in confidence, that her master was so fond of low company before he was so ill, no gentlefolks

would associate with him—not to mention his being seldom sober one hour out of the four-and-twenty.

Martin could not say much in his defence, having seen him disguised in liquor during his former visit to Eskdale, at which time Gwynne was ill in bed. The invalid, never very clear-sighted, and whose eyes grew every minute more dim, had not recollected him; if he had, Mr. Harland would have told him he had visited him by his order. The gardener, who had admitted him, was the only person likely to recognise him; and when he joined him and Mrs. Gwynne in her parlour, he told him he thought he had seen him before at Eskdale. Martin was prepared to deny the charge, though he agreed he had formerly lived in Wales, appealing to Mrs. Gwynne.

"To be sure you did, Mr. Martin; I very well remember you; Morgan may have seen you then, and so mistakes you for some of my master's pot companions," turning

turning the conversation upon London, where she had been in her youth.

Martin inquired whether she had ever accompanied Mrs. Harland thither?

"Never; she always goes and comes alone," winking at the valet, as much as to say she would be more communicative but for Morgan.

"Pray has, or had not she a son at school in England?" he inquired.

"Not that I ever heard of," was the reply.

"Then I have been misinformed; but a friend of mine told me he had often seen her at Bristol, near where she had a son at school."

"He must have been mistaken, though she may now and then have taken that road to London, where she often goes to attend to a chancery suit: it is about some property left her by an aunt, which has proved so expensive, that Mr. Harland and she were glad to accept of the earl of Delmont's offer to reside here rent free. My

master was a sort of overlooker, till he gave himself up to drinking. Mr. Tremayne, the lawyer, is the present steward; the earl is my lady's own cousin."

"I know he is; I am perfectly acquainted with the family history. Mr. Edward Harland was once brother, by marriage, to his lordship, and so was your master."

"Only to see how things come out! well, madam need not be so close."

Familiarity being thus completely established between Martin and Gwynne, she offered eggs, butter, and cheese for the gentlemen's supper, and was, in short, all complaisance. Having partaken of a slight evening's repast, Mr. Edward Harland requested the invalid would go to bed, as by means of a bed-chair and pillows, though he could not lie down, he sometimes took a short rest. Martin inquired if he should summons Mrs. Gwynne.

"I never wish to see the worthless jade again; she is so rough and unfeeling, that I have

I have frequently not undressed rather than call her to my assistance, and more often dosed in this chair to avoid the fatigue of moving."

"And could not you summon her in the night if you were taken worse, or required drink or medicine?" asked the indignant brother.

"Yes, there is a bell which goes into her room, but she never chooses to hear it before seven o'clock in the morning; nay, she has more than once stood me out that I had never rang; and there was an excellent reason why—as I crawled into her room last week to see how the bell was situated, and I found the clapper was wrapped round with tow."

"What a vile contrivance! but is she not more upon the alert when Mrs. Harland is at home?"

"Not a whit; she is, if possible, rather more insolent, and quite as negligent."

"Then she is innocent, in comparison," cried the colonel. "We will make her

unfeeling lady wince when she does come, if her heart and conscience are not absolute adamant."

"And while you do live, brother, I will never leave you again at their mercy: to-morrow we will enter into some further arrangements, if you can bear a removal: here you shall not remain."

"And I will watch by you to-night, sir," said Martin, "and with your leave assist you into bed. Will you take any thing more before you retire?"

As he had taken some ale when his visitors eat their supper, he was not inclined for any thing else; therefore, having shewn his master to the room prepared for him, and rendered the sofa-bed as comfortable as circumstances admitted, he assisted the invalid to bed, who declared he had never been so gently handled for years, therefore hoped he should obtain some quiet rest.

Martin trimmed the watch-light, and took his station in the large arm-chair, where he soon forgot himself, and did not wake

wake till he was roused by a sort of rustling, which proceeded from the bed. He instantly approached, and found the greater part of the bed-clothes on the floor, which he silently replaced, when the invalid, speaking very low, said—" I am very sorry I disturbed you, Mr. Martin ; I tried to be very quiet, but I felt very cold."

" Well you might, sir, the clothes were nearly all off you. I fear you have been very restless."

" What o'clock is it? is it time to get up? I slept for some time; but I have been awake this long time, and feel very tired of this half-lying, half-sitting posture."

" That I can suppose, sir; but as it wants a quarter to three, I hope when I have covered you up again, you will be able to take another nap."

" No, I shall not sleep again—I had rather get up; I shall be more comfortable in my arm-chair."

" In another hour I will assist you to rise;

rise; but I wish you to try whether warmth and quiet may not lull you to sleep once more."

"Give me something to drink then."

"Here is your medicine, which you ought to have taken at bed-time, only having drank ale, it might have disagreed with you; so let me persuade you to take it now."

"You know best; but I had rather have a little brandy and water."

"I really dare not indulge you at so unseasonable an hour; try what the medicine will do first; if that does not compose you, I will give you what you require."

He made no further objections; but continued so very restless, and complained so much of thirst and weariness, that Martin assisted him to rise and dress between five and six, and had but just placed him in his arm-chair, and wrapped his feet and legs in a blanket, when Mr. Edward Harland, who had not slept very sound, joined them,

them, having heard them for some time upon the move, inquiring how his brother found himself.

"Oh, very happy since you are so near me; but I am very thirsty, and Mr. Martin objects to my taking some brandy and water; yet I know either that or a draught of ale would compose me to sleep."

As his brother felt assured that complying with his wishes would not accelerate his dissolution, and might compose his mind, he desired him only to say which he preferred, since he should not be denied any indulgence with his consent.

He chose ale, as he could take a more hearty draught. Martin, who had retained the key of the cellar, soon brought him some, which he seemed greatly to enjoy; and then having comfortably settled him in his chair, left his brother to watch by him while he went to his master, whom he found dressing, not having slept better than his friend.

The valet related all that had occurred during

during the night, hinting that he feared the invalid was drawing to a close, he appeared so restless and yet so cold.

The colonel joined the merchant in the dressing-room, and as the invalid appeared in a comfortable dose, they conversed in a low voice, while the valet prepared breakfast, Mrs. Gwynne having risen unusually early to get the kettle boiling.

The gentlemen soon dispatched their meal, and had scarcely finished, ere Martin, who had remained with the patient, over whose face he had thrown a handkerchief, fancying he did not perceive him breathe, soon found his suspicions were well founded; the ale had certainly brought on a dose from which he never awoke: he communicated the melancholy intelligence to Mr. Harland and his master, who were very thankful he had gone off so quietly; indeed, a prolongation of existence would to him have proved merely an increase of suffering.

What

What course should they now pursue was the next consideration; Mrs. Harland was expected at Eskdale in the course of a few hours, and they were undecided whether to await her arrival, or to remove immediately to the inn where the Holyhead mail changed horses, which Martin represented as a very good house, and which was within three miles. Their presence could no longer minister to the comfort of the deceased, and they had no wish to remain the guest of a woman they both detested and despised; still as they were resolved to follow their relative to the grave, and meant the funeral should be suitable to his former rank in life, and at their expence, it would be necessary to give proper orders before they departed. Martin respectfully suggested the propriety of letting the housekeeper know that her master was no more.

"You are right; let her procure proper assistance," replied Mr. Harland; "and ask her who is the best undertaker in the vicinity:

vicinity: we shall leave every thing to you: hitherto you have rendered her quite subservient to your will."

Thus authorized, the valet, who had taken a hasty meal while the gentlemen were consulting with each other, now descended to the kitchen.

"Bless me, where have you been all this while, sir? I have been waiting breakfast this half hour."

"Then pray fall to, as I have been too sorrowfully engaged to have much appetite. Your second victim is gone where you can never expect to go, except you can very speedily make your peace with Heaven."

"My victim! what do you mean, Mr. Martin? I am sure, if my poor master is dead, I cannot be accused of having hastened his end; so do not think to come any of your flams over me! I suppose the poor soul is gone, you look so pale! Death is very shocking, to be sure; even the stoutest heart quails at the sight of it; poor

poor man! well, he is happy, though he was deadly peevish."

"Certainly you paid him such wonderful attention, 'tis strange he should ever have lost his temper; I only say you and your more wicked accomplice ought to rejoice, instead of shedding crocodile tears, of which no one will be the dupe, since the dead can tell no tales; to be sure, he was spared to relate such instances of your joint negligence and cruelty, that I really do not know what might prove the consequence, should his brother accuse you both of having indirectly shortened his life; you may escape, as heretofore, with merely a severe reprimand, as you may or will, I suppose, plead your mistress's orders for your share in the business, therefore do not spare her—do you throw the first stone: if you will be guided by my advice, I will bring you through in triumph; swear it was by her orders you gave your master food and liquor only fit for your grunting favourites, and do not fail

fail to declare she desired you to muffle your bell, that you might not hear the summons of your then dying master, else you will bear all the blame; admitting he did often sit all night in his chair, for lack of assistance, you must either say it was by his own desire, or that your mistress thought he was less liable to suffocation up than a-bed, and had forbid your attending to his fancies: you must now be aware that I am advising you for your good."

Of this Gwynne was not so sure; yet she felt that it would be more to her interest to throw any supposed errors or blame upon her mistress, than to screen her at the expence perhaps of her neck; therefore adopting Martin's suggestion, she whimpered out—"That if she had erred, it was through ignorance; masters and mistresses should not take the advantage of poor servants to make them do wrong."

"Now you have taken it up properly; the blame must fall somewhere, so let it come to your lady's share."

"I am

"I am sure so it ought, Mr. Martin. But what will be the upshot, should I clear myself at her expence? She will not continue here, that she has told me; and if I make her my enemy, she will neither take me with her, nor provide for me here; I never was in such a quandary. Do, dear, good sir, advise me how I can avoid quarrelling with my lady, without making myself answerable for her faults!" As she was standing near a window, while she was thus trying to remain friends with all parties, she saw a carriage slowly descending a steep hill which led down to the house.—"There she comes, as I am alive! she will be here in a few minutes; what a pretty pickle I am in to receive her!"

"Dry your eyes, and bathe them with cold water; receive her as if nothing had happened, as you must not tell her at first of her husband's death—the shock might prove fatal."

"Ay, you may well smile when you talk so, Mr. Martin. I assure you I never

ver prayed for my master's death as she used to do."

"I believe you, and it is amazing to me you did not feel that it was to your interest to prolong his existence; but a thought has this moment struck me—as I might prove a most material witness in your behalf, should the present Mr. Harland institute any unpleasant inquiries, could not you place me in some corner, where I might overhear what passes between you upon her first arrival?"

"That I can easily manage," leading the way into a parlour. "She will come in here as soon as she alights, and in that closet she always writes and reads, fastening herself in when she does not choose to be disturbed; you can leave the door a-jar, and should she discover your retreat, I can say I was not aware of your being there."

"Do so, and do not spare either the gentlemen or me—call us any thing you choose, as I would not have her imagine that you and I are in a league; should she

she suspect where I am, let her suppose that I hid myself to learn some of her secrets—do you abuse me as vehemently as she will; meanwhile direct me to an undertaker." She mentioned a neighbouring joiner and carpenter, adding—" I see I shall run no risk in following your advice, since you seem almost as deep as madam, and indeed she never was better matched; as to me, she could make me say and do just what she pleased."

" I know she could; but there is not a moment to lose!" flying up stairs, to request the gentlemen would remain quiet, as madam was coming, and he had, he hoped, sprung a mine that might let them into some of her secrets, hurrying down; and he was but just in time to secure his retreat, and to seize a sheet of paper and a pen, ere the postilion drew up to the entrance.

Mr. Harland and the colonel agreed to follow his directions, as some good and no harm could arise from the delay likely to take

take place; indeed they were in no haste to see a woman whom they almost held in abhorrence, since though they were aware they could not accuse her of having murdered her husband, they were certain she had not endeavoured to render his latter days comfortable.

CHAPTER XI.

Gwynne, who had purposely barred and locked the front door, allowed Martin full time to make his arrangements, since fear, not love, bound her to Mrs. Harland, who but too often treated her as a mere slave, and scarcely ever suffered her to have a will of her own when she was at home.

Having admitted this wily coadjutress of a far more accomplished villain, and made her curtsey, "You are quite right to keep the door barred, Gwynne," dismissing

missing the postilion, turning a deaf ear to his petition for a draught of ale, and he retired, certainly not muttering blessings upon her. "I commend you, Gwynne," she continued, entering the parlour; "it is hardly safe now-a-days to turn one's back."

"Indeed, madam," replied the old woman, "you never spoke more true. I only wonder I am alive to receive you, after the fright I underwent yesterday!"

"What do you mean, you old fool? what frightened you? Why, you hardly seem to be yourself even now!"

"Fool, or no fool, wiser people would have been equally frightened; I don't know when I shall be myself again, what with one thing and another!"

"Your tongue runs very fast this morning; so pray spare me your retorts, and tell me what you mean, though I expect the mountain will produce a molehill!"

"You have such queer sayings, madam, you would make a cat laugh; though you

will not think it any joke, when I assure you I thought the castle would have been robbed."

"You thought! Have not I cautioned you repeatedly against daring to think? so pray spare me your fright, and tell me how your master is. He has not ran away in his alarm, I hope?"

"No, no, madam, his running days are over—you knew that before you left home; and if they had not, he was more ready to run to, than from these intruders; I had the fright, and he the pleasure."

"Grant me patience with the foolish woman! Tell me what you mean this moment! how dare you keep me in suspense?"

"Why, you will not let me tell my story, madam. Yesterday, between one and two, a postchaise drove up to the door, as yours did just now; I ran out, thinking of no harm, expecting it had brought you, madam, when who should walk up to the door but two gentlemen, and a servant, the

best

best looking and the youngest of the party."

"That is, he pleased your fancy most, I suppose."

"He soon made me change my opinion, for he was much the most impudent of the three; but I was too many for him, till he put me all of a twitter, by talking of ladders and hogs; I cannot even now think how he became so wise, as I do not think he was ever a justice's clerk."

"I only wish you were again before one—I would not again exert myself to save your worthless life! Who were these gentlemen—and what did they want?"

"To see my master, madam, inquiring whether you were at home. I refused them admittance point blank, as they brought no letter from you; but, Lord! it was like preaching to the wind; see my master they were resolved; as to you or your orders, they snapped their fingers at them; I got between them and the house, and if they had not been too many for me,

I would have smacked the door in their faces; it was in vain I cried thieves and murder! One of them said his name was Harland, and that he was my master's brother, and see him he would, if he broke every door and window in the house, and every bone in my skin; I declared my master had no brother; they called me a lying, worthless old jade; oh Lord! what did not they say! much more than I can or dare repeat; I am sure they made my hair stand an end, so you cannot be surprised at their making good their entrance."

Mrs. Harland, who was now as quiet as she had been impatient, asked in a much more mild, nay even conciliating tone—"Did they see your master at last?"

"To be sure they did; how could I prevent them? Had you prepared me to expect them, madam, I should not have been so taken by surprise; they should have broken both doors and windows then to have gained admittance. I never heard my master had a brother or any relations;

so

so if you choose to keep me in the dark, you must take the consequence, as I can spell and put together, if I am a fool."

"I have been a much greater, or I should have been spared your present insolence. What was the other gentleman's name? do not deceive me, lest I should suspect you were in a league with these intruders."

"Well, that is a good one! should I have refused them admittance, or been treated like a dog amongst them, if this is the thanks I get for obeying your orders, I am indeed a fool for abiding by them;—I only hope you may have your share of their abuse!"

"Now do not provoke me, Gwynne; I never knew you take such liberties. Did your master acknowledge one of the intruders for his brother?"

"I believe he did; why they cried over each other like children, and 'twas my dear Edward at every word—he had never been so happy in his life. The other

gentleman also seemed a great favourite; he is a colonel Murray."

"Colonel Murray! can he have been here—and with Mr. Harland? I have heard they were friends; and I was told in London that the colonel was just returned from India, where I did hope he would have laid his bones. As to that busy meddling Ned Harland, I thought he had been in Russia; I had no idea he knew where his brother was. He cheated my husband of his birthright, as he is the youngest; but he coaxed his father and a silly old uncle to make him their heir to my Mr. Harland's great prejudice; of course, the brothers were never friends afterwards; indeed, neither my husband or me ever mentioned the relationship. I have not heard Mr. Edward Harland's name for years, so it is not very surprising that I never put you upon your guard against him: but it can be of no consequence his having sought his brother; perhaps he wanted him to make a will

in

in his favour. Did you understand what passed during the visit? I hope they have left the neighbourhood."

"Left the neighbourhood! why they have not left the house—they are now above stairs."

"Now in the house! you do not mean it! How dare they take up their abode here uninvited! The castle is not ours. Who but such a poor weak-brained sot would have suffered them to spend the night under this roof! I only wish I had been at home—I would have turned them out neck and heels. Where is the valet you mentioned? I hope you were thoroughly upon your guard before him?"

"As to where he is now, I am sure I cannot take upon me to say; half an hour ago he was inquiring for pen, ink, and paper; I sent him off with a flea in his ear; I did not flinch, I promise you, though he certainly did throw out some strange hints; but I set him at defiance. Folks cannot be tried twice for the same offence. He

had not been here half an hour, when he called about him as if he was at an inn, insisting upon my giving him the key of the larder, and really I was so frightened I dared not refuse; I have plucked up a spirit since. Well, there he spied a nice chicken, which I had killed for your dinner to-day, madam, and as beautiful an apricot pie as ever eyes beheld; and in ferretting about, he stumbled upon the pork tub, when he chose the nicest piece, and desired me to dress that and the fowl for dinner; and as my master supported him in his impudence, what could I do, since he really was a relation? I am sure no tongue can tell what I have gone through since yesterday!"

"Where was Morgan all this time? why did not he turn the servant into the street?"

"It being master's brother, you know, madam, tied both our tongues and our hands.

"Had I been at home, I would have sent for a constable; they should neither have

have dined nor supped here; I suppose the wretched being above encouraged them, as you observed, to consider themselves at home; but I have not done with them, they shall find to their cost. Did you hear at all what passed between the precious trio?"

"I only heard enough to know that my master made great complaints of his living. Unluckily the valet stumbled upon some stewed veal, which was what he called sour, and that led to his taunting me about the hogs and the ladder: he has a very foul tongue of his own; no one, great or small, can escape his lash; mercy upon me, how he did alarm me! he stands to no repairs, gentle or simple; he spares no one, if he fancies he has a handle upon them."

At this very moment Martin rushed out of the closet, with a letter in his hand, and a pen behind his ear.—"Fetch me a light to seal my letter, mother Prate-apace, before your kind-hearted lady turns me

out neck and heels, or has recourse to a constable."

It would have been difficult to ascertain which of the females screamed the loudest; the old woman, who was best prepared, acted her part admirably, by falling all her length upon the floor; Mrs. Harland started up in wild amaze, and screamed incessantly, not choosing to faint, as she wished to gain time for reflection.

"A guilty conscience needs no accuser," cried Martin: "if I did not feel a degree of pity for you both, I would drench you with cold water to recall your scattered senses."

Gwynne began to call repeatedly upon her Maker to forgive her her sins, as she felt she was dying; the rogue had at last accomplished his ends by frightening her to death; but while she did breathe, she would stand by her dear lady, for whom she would work her fingers to the bone for her support.

"Your lady will not be less liberal in promises

promises I dare say, since she is bound to provide for one who has risked so much in her service."

Mrs. Harland was sobbing aloud, and was hardly able to falter out—"Insolent scoundrel! how dare you to secrete yourself in my private study? Gwynne, go instantly in search of Morgan, and desire him to fetch the nearest constable. Oh that I had but a proper protector, I would make this rascal repent his insolence!"

"How unfortunate your *honourable protector* is at such a distance! Surely you must do me the *honour* to recollect me; we travelled from Bristol together not many days since," looking her full in the face.

She seemed more surprised and disconcerted, while she acknowledged his features were familiar to her; adding—"Do you and your present master take it i turns to be servant? as you then appeared as a gentleman, now you condescend to play valet, to afford you an opportunity

to insult any unfortunate female who may chance to fall in your way. Are the people above really Mr. Edward Harland and the seducer of his sister, colonel Murray?"

"Keep your temper, Mrs. Harland, and a guard upon your tongue when mentioning colonel Murray; neither he nor Mr. Harland would encourage any dependent to insult defenceless females: but I am not inclined to pass over the fabrications you amused Gwynne with in silence. You know the elder Mr. Harland was even more bountiful to your husband than to his younger son, and that the large fortune he now enjoys he inherited from his mother's brother, who was not even related to your Mr. Harland, who was, unfortunately for him, a scion of *nobility* on the female side; however, peace to his ashes! as he enjoyed but little upon earth; therefore it has pleased God to release him from the torments of you and your base accomplice, whom you saved from the gallows,

as

as you reproached her in my hearing, that she might assist you in your iniquitous plans inflicted upon him. Yes, *the worthless drunken sot* is no more. This letter was written to the undertaker; but perhaps you may choose to dispute his brother's right to bury him!"

Mrs. Harland, whose conscience did revive upon these accusations, in trying to reseat herself, slid down on the floor, and rested her head upon the seat of her chair; a deathlike paleness evinced her not wholly devoid of feeling, while large drops of perspiration chased each other down her ghastly cheeks. Gwynne stood over her, wringing her hands, now and then stealing a glance at Martin, as much as to say, have not I topped my part? The valet, who was almost sorry he had been so severe with the wretched widow, raised her in his arms, and placed her on a sofa, desiring the less feeling Welchwoman to fetch a glass of water. She left the room for that purpose, while he continued to support

support her head. They were no sooner alone than she gave him a most imploring look, while she pressed his hand to her throbbing temples. He was not adamant; still, when he reflected upon her treachery towards his beloved master, and much-lamented mistress, his heart became steeled against her meretricious arts; he therefore merely requested she would compose herself; he was sorry he had been so abrupt in his communications; he ought to have reflected that she had many reasons to deplore her husband's loss.

"He really is dead then, poor man!"

"He was indeed to be pitied; to him death has proved a very happy release: had he been properly attended to, and had he been provided with an experienced, clever nurse, he might have lingered longer; therefore perhaps yours and Gwynne's were tender mercies to abridge his sufferings. A chancery suit of many years' standing required your presence in London, I understood? When I had the honour

nour of being your travelling companion, I had the advantage of seeing your *solicitor*, when he called upon you at your snug lodgings. I hope he was able to report progress, as I believe him to be all-powerful!"

This raillery did Mrs. Harland no harm, as it enabled her to shed a flood of tears: the glass of water assisted to restore her spirits. Gwynne was dismissed; and having devoted a few minutes to reflection, this female Machiavel requested Martin would take a seat, declaring, that during the journey he alluded to, she had considered his manners and conversation those of a gentleman, little suspecting that he was employed as a spy to watch and report her words and actions.—"But I have seen so much duplicity, particularly among the higher classes, among whom my family and connexions may be ranked, and I have purchased experience at so dear a rate, that I am very seldom caught off my guard. You wished to appear very polite

polite when we stopped in Piccadilly, from whence you seem to have followed me to my lodging, else how did you learn or discover that I saw my solicitor that evening?"

"As I have, like yourself, madam, found experience a most expensive commodity, you must excuse my not satisfying your curiosity. You are related, if not connected, with statesmen: they and their concerns are not to be mentioned incautiously. I can only tell you that your solicitor is a tall, handsome, dark man: I dare not mention his age, merely as supposing it has matured his judgment: he remained an hour, minus three minutes, in consultation with you, and I do not think you could have selected another man whose talents and influence are so likely to benefit your cause."

Cousin Jane gave him a look, which shewed she understood his meaning.—"You are very accurate as to time, it should appear; yet surely it was wasting

it

it to watch my motions. You did not remain long in town?"

"I left London on Thursday morning, madam, having completed the business that carried me thither sooner than I expected, since I am, properly speaking, colonel Murray's secretary—at least such was my post in India, where I became so attached to him that I would act as his groom, rather than hold a situation in any —nay, even your *solicitor's* office; and here I am at your service—the colonel's travelling valet."

"I will not compare you to Scrub, Mr. Secretary, as you remind me more of Gil Blas: but may I inquire how you came to conceal yourself in my writing closet? was that by your master's orders?"

"That was by mere accident, madam; the trust-worthy Mrs. Gwynne stood her ground, upon our arrival, like a true heroine, sure, of course, of your approbation. I obtained neither favour nor affection from her, till I reminded her of your humanity

manity towards her. She was so averse to furnishing me with pen, ink, and paper, that I seized by force what she was so anxious to withhold, which I found ready to my hand in this closet. Your arrival and near vicinity rendered me dubious whether to appear immediately, or to wait your departure; probably, had not the window been double-barred, I should have descended from thence into the garden. Your conversation with Gwynne became, however, so interesting, that I remained transfixed to the spot, and must acknowledge that the old lady generally stated facts."

"Which were not much in your favour: as to what I said, I defy you, or even my greatest enemies, to turn or twist to my prejudice."

"Then it was no harm to represent Mr. Harland as having grossly wronged your husband; not to mention your threats, since if you had not had some very cogent reasons for preventing the deceased from seeing

seeing his friends and relatives, why should you have felt so angry at his brother and brother-in-law having paid him a visit? Were you afraid they should learn how well the deceased had been attended to—what excellent food was prepared for him? &c. Mrs. Gwynne may plead your orders for her behaviour; the favour you have shewn her will perfectly account for her submissive obedience: hitherto you have played your cards so dexterously, that you have generally rendered all those connected with you, your puppets, or your tools; and supported as you have been, you have escaped open censure, if not suspicion. I dare say you understand to what I allude, and I do not suppose that you particularly wish I should repeat to Mr. Harland and the colonel, at least verbatim, the conversation I have just overheard."

"It could not benefit them, I am of opinion; so instead of indirectly threatening each other, let us proclaim a truce, and

and do you account to me for what has greatly surprised me—the unexpected death of Mr. Harland; and I wish also to learn what his relatives intended to have done, had I not returned, perhaps as I may derange their schemes rather mal-a-propos," offering her hand to Martin, in token of amity.

He received it with due respect, while looking her stedfastly in the face, he replied—" Was not you aware of Mr. Harland's serious danger before you left home, since you affect not to have been prepared to expect his dissolution? I am afraid that excuse will not qualify your conduct towards him, since your late husband accused both you and Gwynne of having most shamefully neglected him. Doctor Price did not seem satisfied when he called yesterday: altogether appearances are very much against you: if Gwynne exceeded your orders, why, you may shift some of the blame upon her shoulders; but then, would a woman of real feeling have left a

man

man in such a state, and to the care of a wretch, who is, notwithstanding your interference in her behalf, more than suspected of having, in cold blood, destroyed her own husband? Now pray reflect upon these circumstances: you ought to weigh well what you may either say or do, situated as you are. Colonel Murray and Mr. Harland are, I believe, in the dressing-room adjoining the one in which are the remains of their brother. What their future plans are I cannot inform you; if you wish to ask them, I will let them know of your arrival."

The excellent actress whom he was addressing now raised her streaming eyes, gently pressed his unresisting hand, while she faltered out—"I am sure you pity me, you seem so perfectly aware of the awkward situation my unfortunate, but really necessary, journey to town has placed me in: you are not acquainted with the provocations I have received from the deceased, who neither possessed a spirit of order

order or of economy: he had rendered the present Mr. Harland his enemy, by not declaring their sister to be a paragon of excellence, at the time she had dishonoured her husband, and disgraced her family."

"Better wave that subject, my dear madam; you know to what cause to place the errors of her, who was not only led into temptation, but almost thrown into the arms of a man who adored her. Those that laid the diabolical plan to forward the divorce between the late Mrs. Murray and earl Delmont, were much more guilty than she was."

"Were you then in your mistress's as well as the colonel's confidence?"

"I was honoured by her good opinion, and hold myself bound to defend her character when called in question."

"Well, well, she shall be an angel of light, if you choose; but as you were certainly in India with colonel Murray, how came you to give Gwynne (though she does not seem to have been your dupe) to under-

understand you had been a Welch justice's clerk?"

"I merely desired her to remember such a person, since I was told her story by a Welchman: you cannot suppose her having escaped the gallows did not at the time excite some comments."

"I have often blamed myself for not having suffered her to stand her trial; the vulgar multitude did not make a proper allowance for my humanity: but let us leave her to repent at leisure, since I wish to know whether Mr. Harland was actuated by any motive, save a wish to see his brother, when he chose to visit Eskdale?"

"I am rather of opinion that he had various reasons for returning sooner than he intended to England: he has long been in habits of intimacy with colonel Murray, and they have both been long very anxious to discover what has really become of the young Marcus Mirvan, who was so strangely spirited away from Mortlake, when the colonel returned with Mrs. Mur-

ray

ray to India: now, if you could assist their endeavours to discover his retreat, I feel assured that you would render them your stanch friends. I do not wish to deceive you: other measures will be had recourse to, should you not feel it to your interest to accede to their wishes. Inquiries will be instituted respecting *William Mansel* —I speak very plain—whom you placed at a very early age under the care of farmer Griffiths, and who has very lately been (probably with your knowledge) removed from thence."

Mrs. Harland was not absolutely prepared for this solution of the reasons which had brought her brother-in-law into Wales: some discoveries, it appeared, had been made very inimical to her interest; and she would have given a tolerable sum to have had her *solicitor* at her elbow. For some minutes she remained silent, resting her head upon her disengaged hand in visible perplexity: at last assuming a more undaunted air than she had yet chosen to

put

put on—" I was seriously reflecting upon the tendency of this strange discourse; but as I am really at an utter loss to fathom your meaning, you must, plain as you have spoken, condescend to be more explicit, since what Mr. Harland or colonel Murray can have to do with my private concerns, I am yet to learn."

" Oh, my dear madam! sagacious as you are known to be, need I explain that the gentlemen above think Marcus Mirvan and William Mansel are one and the same?"

" Then their sagacity is strangely at fault; the boy you allude to, whom I placed with the Griffithses, will never be transformed into the heir to an earldom: poor fellow! how little is he, or those he belongs to, aware of these gentlemen's kind intentions! really the suggestion is too ridiculous. So I am supposed to have played a very pretty part! Only let Mr. Harland dare to assert what you hint, then I can meet him fairly and openly;

and believe me, were I so inclined, I could very soon set both his and the romantic colonel's mind perfectly at ease respecting William Mansel, whom I now begin to suspect, in furtherance of their very wise scheme, one or the other has removed from Broomfields. Who knows but they may persuade earl Delmont that his son has been brought up in obscurity, to answer some wise purpose of mine? Take my word, Mr. Martin, very different measures and precautions would have been adopted, had the poor lad been of any consequence. I can, when called upon, produce proof positive as to who he is, who were his parents, &c. It may be unpleasant to declare all this publicly, to humour the strange notions of two romantic enthusiasts; but if they have spirited him away to impose him upon earl Delmont, I shall not shrink from the trial, unpleasant as it may be to my feelings to relate, what it had been deemed prudent not to make the poor youth acquainted with till he

he was eighteen: as to where he now is, I cannot even form the remotest idea. I only hope these meddling gentlemen have not filled his head with romances of their own fabrication, since, take my word, Mr. Martin, they will never prove him to be the Marcus Mirvan they are in search of, who has no doubt been long since dead, if he was not removed at the time he was missing by the Murrays."

"Well, madam, if you have stated facts, the gentlemen are of course mistaken in their conjectures. I shall of course tell them how much they have wronged you: perhaps you would like to convince them of their error, or at least to hear what has led to their forming the suspicions I have avowed."

"I neither wish to see, or ever again to hold converse with, two people so prejudiced against me: they were never friends of mine, since I discovered that the colonel intrigued with lady Exmore; and now I suppose there has been some collusion

between them and the poor dupe who is dead. I must be very much upon my guard; but you are a man of sense, Mr. Martin, and must be aware that I could have no interest to secrete Mrs. Murray's son: perhaps I have expressed myself too warmly respecting your friends, the knight-errants—so do not repeat all I have said; merely assure them that I cannot direct them, if I would, to William Mansel; and that were I not bound to secrecy, I would openly declare who and what he is; still I do not think they have any right to demand even this explanation, which I volunteer upon your account. They may now have recourse to any measures they choose; I only hope they will not hold out absurd threats, or propagate scandalous stories of their own fabrication, since they may be required to prove what they seem inclined to assert upon the faith of their own conjectures."

"I will repeat what you say: I need not mention that you fully rely upon the talents

talents and protection of——shall I say your *solicitor?*"

"Nonsense!" she replied, in the same tone; "merely say that I shall be able to defend myself, should they venture to attack me; but, positively, their absurd suspicions, the recent death of Mr. Harland, and various other circumstances, have so confused me, that I hardly know what I either say or do."

"You decline seeing the gentlemen, I suppose, till after the funeral?"

"I shall not see them at all, with my own good will: they are welcome to continue inmates of the castle for a few days; we have no need to meet. I would only have them recollect that Eskdale belongs to earl Delmont; and as the steward is no more, I have no right to admit or receive people who cannot rank among his lordship's acquaintance, and are still less to be considered as his friends. Should you, Mr. Martin, who seem a well-behaved, well-inclined young man, have any mes-

sage to deliver, or wish to have any farther conversation with me, you will find me in this room till I retire for the night;" rising, and again presenting him her hand, assuring him that she trusted to his good sense to prevent two romantic fools from exposing themselves.

"Thou art the most complete female Machiavel that ever fell under my observation!" was his mental soliloquy, as he almost brushed against Gwynne, who had evidently been upon the listen: he hoped she had caught up something to torment her mistress with; but they had no time for conversation, as Mrs. Harland's bell rang violently; she could only say—"I have long suspected there was a child," leaving him to relate the result of his conference to the gentlemen.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XII.

"WHY, Martin," exclaimed the colonel, the moment the valet had closed the door, "we began to think your proposed conference would be endless: we were not, however, inclined to interrupt you."

Martin was afraid he had tired their patience, therefore briefly related every word that had passed since Mrs. Harland's arrival. At a less melancholy moment the gentlemen would have been highly amused: as it was, Mr. Harland was very glad Martin had so adroitly broached the subject of William Mansel; but as she had so plainly acknowledged that she considered them as intruders, they resolved to leave the castle immediately, asking Martin whether they could be accommodated at the public-house in the village,

as there they could see the various tradespeople, and give orders respecting the funeral, madam not having expressed a wish to interfere with those arrangements.

Martin's report was more favourable than they expected: the landlord was a farmer as well as publican, and his house was adapted to both lines: they could be decently accommodated with private, quiet bedrooms, and a good parlour, at the back of the dwelling, to which there was access without approaching the tap-room or kitchen. The landlady, who was very civil, boasted of her culinary talents —at all events they might make shift for a week or ten days: therefore within the hour, followed by Martin, carrying their portmanteaus, they left the castle, the latter requesting Mrs. Gwynne would send the undertaker to the inn; and as he thought he might glean something from the old woman, he made her a very handsome present, under the plea of paying for the provisions they had consumed.

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She was profuse in her thanks, adding—"Don't be beguiled by madam's promises and fair words; she only wants to pick your brains, she told me: as for the gentlemen, she sets them at defiance; they shall find, to their cost, that she has most powerful friends; they had best take care she don't indict them for a conspiracy."

The valet thanked her for the communication, which he repeated to the gentlemen, who found themselves really pleasantly situated at the Dun Cow, which was also the post-office. Their dinner was very neatly served, and both agreed that good salmon and Welch mutton were real luxuries. While they were regaling in the parlour, their having taken up their abode at this little inn was variously discussed in the kitchen and tap-room. Martin waited upon them, therefore the farmers and peasantry assembled were under no restraint.

Mrs. Harland was generally disliked: her husband, while able to go about, had

been laughed at for a henpecked fool; but when he was confined to the house, he was generally pitied. The butcher and baker were sure he had been half-starved. Who but madam Harland would have suffered dame Gwynne to nurse him? Of course the ladder and the hog were introduced, not much to the credit of either. What a pity these gentlemen did not arrive sooner! yet she had doubtless treated them very rudely, else they would not have removed to the Dun Cow. The postilion who had brought her, and was preparing to return, declared she was wretched stingy. In short, it was agreed, *nem. con.* that she possessed neither feeling, charity, nor any one good quality; and as for dame Gwynne, they only hoped madam would take the worthless jade with her, when she left Wales, as such wretches were enough to bring a judgment upon the parish. However, she never dare shew her nose without the castle walls. Some were sure old Gwynne walked

walked about the old cottage; and they all seemed to apprehend that Mr. Harland would not rest in his grave. While these fears were being avowed in the tap-room, doctor Price, who had been at the castle, called at the Dun Cow to see the gentlemen, to whom he was immediately admitted. He apologized for having made it so late, but having been called up in the night to the assistance of a female, he had not been able to leave her sooner. He was by no means surprised to learn from dame Gwynne that Mr. Harland was no more, assuring the gentlemen he considered it a very happy release.

"Have you seen the disconsolate widow?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, sir; I was admitted to a short conference, when she expressed her apprehension that your visit, gentlemen, had hastened her husband's death. I did not spare her in return, you may believe me. I am only sorry I did not see you before you removed hither, as I should be most

happy to accommodate you during your stay in Wales."

"You are very obliging," rejoined Mr. Harland; "but we are so much better off than we had expected in every respect, that we shall feel more at home here than even as your guest. You must assist us with your advice respecting the funeral, and give us as much of your company as your avocations will admit."

This the doctor readily promised, on condition that they would spend at least a day with him before they left Wales.

"Was he at all acquainted with earl Delmont?" Mr. Harland inquired.

"Not personally; he had never, to his knowledge, visited Eskdale. Tremayne, the law steward, spoke in the highest terms of him; and the tenants in general considered him as a liberal landlord: his audit feasts did credit to his munificence. The late Mr. Harland was very fond of presiding upon those occasions, and was certainly not sparing of liquor. At times

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he had spoken in praise of the earl; but latterly he seemed to feel himself neglected; and, but for him, would have quarrelled with Tremayne, who looked up to his lordship as a demi-god."

"My poor brother's early extravagance and weak good humour, had placed him so completely at the earl's mercy, that it was not worth his lordship's while to court his favour; indeed never was a man so popular, and so much looked up to, who so little deserved to be admired for his private life; as a statesman he is unrivalled—as a financier he was never equalled; but as a *man*, he has failings which are merely varnished over to the eye of the world, and are very inimical to domestic happiness: I speak feelingly you must know, Mr. Price—the opinion I formed of his lordship while only Marcus Mirvan, has never altered. I then thought his talents were transcendent, and that he would rise to the first honours of the state; but

but I also thought him selfish, unfeeling, avaricious, and devoid of either religion or morality, and such he has proved himself in more instances than one."

Mr. Price, who had heard the family history, agreed that a good minister and a good man were very different characters, taking his leave immediately after tea, as he had some patients to visit; and such was the brilliant *halo* that surrounded earl Delmont, even in this remote province, that the surgeon considered Mr. Harland as a prejudiced judge, who did not make allowances for an injured husband, since a man so admired, nay, so idolized by the multitude, could not deserve the reproaches he bestowed upon him. As to the few hints he had picked up from the deceased, he had placed them to the score of irritation, since he felt more inclined to laugh at, than to believe that this great man, whose elegance of mind and manners he had heard so highly extolled, ever intrigued with

with Mrs. Harland, who, though once an elegant, handsome woman, was fast losing every pretension to beauty.

"The doctor seems to have a higher opinion of the earl than we have reason to entertain," observed the colonel, when they were again alone.

"I am not surprised; there is a fascination about him that will ever deceive those who have not, like us, peeped behind the curtain. Could we conceal Martin in lady Delmont's boudoir, I much doubt whether we should not consider her as a very miserable wife, though she had family connexions to gratify his proud ambition, and a fortune sufficient to gratify his avarice."

"He never can be happy if, as I must suppose, he was privy to the removal of his son, who must, in my opinion, be the William Mansel who has left Griffiths's; that vile Mrs. Harland defies us to prove him lord Delmont's son; and I dare say she will, if obliged, tell a most plausible tale to account for her having placed him

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at Broomfields. Unfortunately we do not know where to find the boy, whom, notwithstanding all she says and swears, she has doubtless removed for some further base purpose."

"Now I am inclined to give her credit for being in ignorance of his present abode; indeed I hope and believe she is not so much at her ease as she affects to appear. We have many reflections to make, and many things to consider, before we attack his lordship, who may foil us at last; indeed for us *pigmies* to make the attempt will be very daring, as I fear his assertions will be more considered than ours. I hope Martin has alarmed his female coadjutrix; sometimes fear has rendered such people very obsequious; but she will take no steps till she has written to and heard from earl Delmont. I would give a tolerable sum to be able to obtain a sight of his lordship's letter, it might throw such light upon the business. I hope we shall obtain some intelligence from the

packet

packet my poor brother had so cautiously secreted. But not to keep you any longer in suspense respecting *William Mansel*, for whom you feel so kindly interested, I am happy to inform you, that I planned and succeeded in removing him from farmer Griffiths's."

"Heaven be praised, my dear Harland! what a weight you have removed from my heart! to know that the dear boy has escaped from the clutches of these fiends, has rendered me completely happy: you are convinced that *William Mansel* is Marcus Mirvan—I should know him from among ten thousand," mentioning the mark he bore.

"I was aware of the circumstance; Mrs. Monkwell, to whom my sister had shewn it, displayed it one day to me when I happened to call at Mortlake, while she was dressing her charge, and *William Mansel* still bears a bird in his bosom, though it is not so visible or so strongly delineated as when he was a baby."

"Then

"Then surely we can oblige the earl to acknowledge him."

"We must not be too sanguine; great precaution is necessary—we must proceed very gently. I hope he will declare the fine youth to be his son, which, by throwing all the blame of his removal and subsequent concealment upon Mrs. Harland, I think he may do with honour; but till we have felt his pulse, I would not have him, for more than I am worth, discover where my nephew now resides, since should he dare to set us at defiance, he will also dare to go any lengths to remove the dear boy out of mine and every other persons knowledge."

"You are right; we know what he has done, therefore we have reason to dread his future machinations. But how did you discover the youth's retreat? and how did you manage to circumvent that wily plotter Mrs. Harland, by removing her *protégé*?"

"You know that I quarrelled with poor

poor Augustus, for having been duped by his wretched wife into believing our sister to be a most depraved character, and in consequence withdrew the allowance I had made him since our father's death: thus poverty placed him wholly at the mercy of his patron, the present earl Delmont, who soon displayed himself in his true colours, since, not content with intriguing with his wanton odious wife, he rendered his life so completely miserable, that he had recourse to the bottle to drown care, which led to his being exiled to Eskdale, under pretence of being appointed nominal steward. Here he had full time allowed him for *meditation even to madness;* and having been long convinced that I had been his most sincere friend, and that he had greatly wronged our beloved Emily, he wrote me a most affecting picture of his wretched situation, broken health, and mental misery, about two years ago, requesting I would direct my answer, under cover, to a riding officer, then

then stationed near Eskdale, one of his boon companions, but on whose secrecy he could depend, acknowledging that he feared were I to address him at Eskdale, his wife, or some of her myrmidons, would intercept the letter.

"My pity was greatly excited; I answered his letter by return of post, and enclosed a small bribe to the officer to win him to our interest. To Augustus I wrote very much at length, promising to make him a small allowance, merely requiring in return that he would candidly inform me whether he knew, or could at all surmise, what had become of the unfortunate infant whom you had been accused of having taken with you to India. The riding officer proved his sincere friend; of course my letter duly reached him, and he lost no time in expressing his gratitude, assuring me that he had neither been directly nor indirectly concerned in the removal of the poor boy, whom he strongly suspected was living, and under the protection

tection of his vile wife; proposing, if it met my approbation, that Charles Warner, the officer, should follow this managing lady the first time he had reason to suspect she crossed the Passage, since he was convinced that some mysterious business was in hand, when she went that way to London for the shortest.

" Not to dwell upon mere details, of course I approved of the notion, but wrote my own instructions to the officer, who I provided with plenty of money; and as it so happened, that in consequence of having been in a league with some smugglers, he thought it prudent to find the situation he held too fatiguing, he had full time allowed him to execute my commission, and brought me the result of his inquiries himself to St. Petersburgh. Like you, I had scarcely a doubt that William Mansel and Marcus Mirvan were the same; still I was anxious to be at a greater certainty; when, as if to forward my wishes and plan, a Swiss merchant, who had been

in

in a considerable line of business at St. Petersburgh, and who had large dealings with many Swiss houses in London, Paris, and Holland, was induced to revisit his native country, from having just inherited the title and some large landed estates belonging to his family. As he and I had long been upon the most intimate terms, and were more like brothers than friends, he readily agreed, having been long perfectly *au fait* of my family and connexions, to visit Westbury, as he meant to embark for England previous to returning home; and as I gave him *carte blanche*, he was to be wholly guided by circumstances, should William Mansel bear any resemblance to my sister, whose miniature I intrusted him with, or to earl Delmont, whom he resolved to see in London, as the young Marcus was very like them both when a baby; but above all, should he bear the mark I described, he was to remove him secretly from his present abode, and take him with him into Switzerland

as

as his ward, keeping the youth in ignorance of his real reasons for so doing.

" Our plans succeeded even beyond our expectation. Mr. Rivers was the name the baron De Villars had borne in Russia, and when he took up his abode at Westbury, where he learnt every particular you are already acquainted with respecting William Mansel, from the reverend Mr. Carter, his early friend, to whom, after some time (and having convinced himself that the youth bore a great resemblance to both his parents, and had besides the mark I had laid such stress upon in his bosom), Mr. Rivers opened his mind, telling this worthy young man that he had my commission to purchase him a living of at least three hundred a-year in any county he preferred in England, if he would assist our plans in removing my nephew, and would accompany him abroad, and continue to act as his private tutor for the ensuing two years.

" The grateful young curate, whose father had a very large family and very small church

church preferment, was not only willing but most anxious to promote the interest of his beloved pupil; though the baron did not put him entirely into his confidence, but told him enough to convince him that William had been the victim of an ambitious father, and of an intriguing woman, who was the principal agent in the business. Fortunately the reversion of an excellent living, in a very fine part of England, was advertised for sale within the week, the present incumbent being in his seventieth year; this my friend immediately purchased for the curate, who instantly gave up his situation, that he might, as well as Mr. Rivers, leave Westbury before William took his departure, which he did, as you have heard, on the day of the fair at St. George's, Mr. Carter having fixed upon that period as the most likely time to prevent an immediate pursuit, and to mislead the Griffithses as to his future intentions.

"Their plan succeeded as fully as they had

had hoped. William joined his kind friends in London early the next morning, where he was soon equipped as became his real rank in life, and immediately after set out for Switzerland with his adopted father baron Villars, and his kind tutor; and they are now most elegantly and commodiously lodged at the baron's beautiful castle of Berne Berg, in the canton of that name, where I spent eight days on my way home, having purposely extended my journey; and I may say that I am really proud of my nephew, who has certainly inherited his father's surprising talents, united, I hope, to his mother's excellent disposition. At present he is supposed to be very nearly related to the baron, who has no near connexions to interfere with his plans; and so partial is that excellent man become to the son of his adoption, that I do not think he wishes success to our plans; and as I am sure that whatever may be the event, the dear youth will now be amply provided for, were I not very anxious to

punish the plotting pair, I believe I should leave them to the goadings of their conscience; at all events I shall make it one of my conditions that Marcus shall remain under my guardianship till he becomes of age; so now let us see what this packet produces."

"I never felt so fully grateful to Providence, as for what I deem the providential rescue of this dear youth, since, no doubt, he would soon have been sent to some of our settlements abroad. I wonder how lord Delmont felt when apprized of his departure!"

"I only wish we could place Martin perdue in his private study. But let us now to business; we will then put that worthy young fellow into our confidence; if any one can enable us to circumvent these prime plotters, he is the man."

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIII.

THE important packet contained a number of letters, and copies of more, which the deceased had written whenever he had been able to lay hands upon any one that at all alluded to the young Marcus—an idea which had been suggested by his brother, and to which he had very strictly adhered; but it was now evident that every precaution had been taken to prevent any one, into whose hands these letters might by accident fall, from understanding the contents. Those addressed to Mrs. Harland were neither written nor signed by the earl, nor even franked by him, and were so cautiously worded, that they afforded our gentlemen very little information. One or two recommended greater precaution—" *The most trifling*

incident sometimes overturned the best arranged plans." She was considered as too fearless of consequences—"*She exposed W. G—— to further demands—she ought not to interfere in trifles—things should be suffered to take their course—a cheap Yorkshire school would have answered every purpose, better than the present more expensive plan.*"

Other letters alluded to various plans in agitation, to dispose of the "*person who had been brought much more into notice than was at all consistent with prudence.—She had gone much beyond her precise instructions; but no immediate alteration of measures would prove of service.*" Ceylon, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Dutch East India settlements, were next mentioned.—"*The climate of Batavia might relieve them from all their fears.*"

"What a villanous thought to enter a father's head!" exclaimed the colonel. "I hope no one but lord Delmont could have conceived the idea of sending a son, who never

never could have offended him, to such a place."

"It will merely put us more upon our guard; but I dare say we shall never be able to prove he even dictated the unfeeling letter."

Another short epistle informed the lady, "*that the preference had been given to the West Indies, where a situation offered likely to answer every present purpose. When all was ready, she should have due notice. W. might be removed within the hour after he was apprized of their intentions; every requisite purchase might be made in London;*" again recommending caution, as she still required that to be enforced.

Upon the envelope of these unsatisfactory epistles, was written by the deceased —"These letters are all written by William Griffiths, the brother of the man under whose care the youth alluded to has been for many years; they are franked by one of the great men in the earl's office,

in whose department Griffiths was placed, no doubt in return for past services, by my lord, whose valet he once was. I have often seen the fellow's writing when in the same office with himself; and I dare say, would it answer any purpose, you might very easily prove what I assert."

Next came a few copies of letters, which were of less consequence, though they all tended to prove that there was some strange mystery connected with the youth at J—— G——'s.

The last letter that fell into their hands was the most curious, having, it should appear, been the joint production of Griffiths and his man David, and which certainly, had it reached Mrs. Harland, would have prepared her for the disappearance of her *protégé*. Upon it was written—"This letter came into my possession by mere chance. Mrs. Harland was, as she generally used to be, from home, when I called, as I often did, at the Dun Cow, at the entrance of the village, where the cross post

post leaves the letters for this neighbourhood. I had taken my seat in the landlady's parlour or bar, when on glancing my eye towards an open cupboard, I caught sight of a letter lying upon a punchbowl, and as I had long suspected that Mrs. Lanfrydd was in a league with my precious wife, that is, that she never sent any letters to the castle till they had first been inspected by Mrs. Harland, I therefore seized the opportunity of her being called away to take a peep, when seeing who it was for, I put it into my pocket, closed the cupboard door, and soon left the house, resolved either to acknowledge what I had done, or to deny the charge, should any be made, as might best suit my purpose. When I had read the contents, I was at a loss what to conjecture. Mrs. Harland was gone to London, and might, even unknown to the Griffithses, have made the youth the companion of her journey; the hints in some of the intercepted letters warrant my suspicion,

therefore I really fear the dear boy may have been sent out of England; when you arrive, you will know better than I can advise what course to pursue. May I live till your return, is now my only hope and my constant prayer."

"Poor fellow, I rejoice his wish was gratified," said Mr. Harland; "but this packet will prove of no service to our cause, since such precautions have been adopted to prevent any one from understanding the real meaning of these letters."

"Which would have been mere folly, if the earl was not fully aware of the very dangerous game he has been playing; but I should not wonder, prepared as I make no doubt the confederates are at all points, that when required to declare who William Mansel is, they should make him out to be Mrs. Harland and William Griffiths's son."

"A very probable conjecture. Thank God the dear fellow is no longer in danger of suffering from their machinations!

James

James Griffiths's letter perfectly accounts for the wretched woman's surprise when Martin was lying under the hedge. I had hoped much from this packet; but I fear it will prove only waste paper—such wretches will never be taken by surprise."

Martin, who had been to the nearest town to make various purchases, now entered the room, to display them to the gentlemen, and he was, as agreed upon, informed of William Mansel's removal, and shewn the lately-opened packet, which he agreed would neither make for nor against their intentions, most heartily rejoicing that his dear mistress's son had been so happily prevented from visiting either East or West Indies, declaring that it seemed so very unnatural, he almost hoped the earl was not a party concerned in Mrs. Harland's villanous schemes; yet every thing contradicted this more favourable view of his lordship's conduct; from whom else came the money? still he might be in ignorance of some of the wicked inten-

tions of the elder Griffiths and Mrs. Harland; they might have greatly exceeded his instructions.

"We will hope so," said Mr. Harland, "since he will then readily join in our wish and intention to punish and expose them. Could we but get a peep at any letter now addressed to the widow, it would be worth its weight in gold."

"I am excellent friends with our landlady, and will improve the acquaintance; therefore I do hope we may be a match for her plotting patroness. Our landlord leaves home to-morrow morning; he is a dealer in cattle, and means to be at several fairs; probably he will not be home before the funeral, therefore time will be allowed me to cajole the wife."

The colonel desired him to beware of rousing the Welchman's angry passions; the merchant only laughed at his intentions; and as it grew late, the gentlemen retired.

Martin had his hands full of business the

the next morning; but the afternoon and evening he devoted to the hostess, with whom he drank tea, pleading his dislike to the smell of smoke for taking his seat in the bar.—"Had she heard how the widow did?" he carelessly inquired.

"She kept very close," she replied, "old Morgan reported, and had given orders to admit no one but the undertaker or his men."

"I dare say neither my master or his friend are inclined to trouble her; but really, in her place, I should be almost afraid to shut up doors with old mother Gwynne."

"It is not much to madam's credit to retain her in her service."

"You forget, my handsome landlady, that she was become a necessary evil, and you were aiding and abetting her in some of her intrigues; however, as the poor gentleman wore his horns very patiently, no doubt he is gone to heaven."

This was spoken in a very gay tone, and was met by a knowing laugh from the landlady—" Why, would you have had me have suffered her letters to fall into her husband's hands? for that is what you allude to. Mr. Harland was often asking me to be more communicative; but I assure you I should have scorned to make mischief between them; it was no business of mine after all; and if I was well paid for merely doing as I would be done by, where was the harm? I should not have spoken so plain, had the poor gentleman been living, and if you had not been wiser than I expected. I am only afraid she will not remain at Eskdale: she was one of my prime customers—in the letter way, mind me; her husband, poor man, spent his money in a different manner."

" Why do not you put in your claim for an annuity for past favours? since now her letters may be openly delivered, there will be no husband to deceive; so make the

the most you can of her. While she does remain here, could not you hint that you require hushmoney?"

"That would never do; for wise as you seem to think me, I do assure you that I neither know to whom she wrote, or who wrote to her. No, no; her intrigues were not carried on here; so she would soon give me as good as I brought, if I was to allude to the past."

"She is very capable of even abusing you, now she is her own mistress; but as to saying you do not know who she wrote to, that is being too reserved, as you must have read the directions of her letters."

"I do not think you would be wiser than I am, if you had done the same: so tell me how you came to suppose she wrote to a lover: if you will satisfy my curiosity, I may perhaps satisfy yours. One good turn deserves another, in Wales as well as elsewhere."

"You would tempt one to do and say any

any thing, fair lady: the sooner I leave the Dun Cow the better, or you will mould me into just what you please. I need not tell you that Mr. Harland in the parlour, and my master, are brothers by marriage, and they are pretty well acquainted with the widow. They would not have given her so much liberty as the deceased did: however, as her husband suffered her to run riot, they did not wish to expose her to the world; but they will not shew her the same lenity now. She used to correspond with a Mr. William Griffiths."

"The deuce take you for a witch! Yes, yes, she sometimes wrote to him at No. —, Charles-street, Westminster; but she generally sent all her letters under cover to my lord—the earl of Delmont, I mean—our lord of the manor; and she always directed to him at his office."

"I know she did; and have not you now a letter from my lord, or Mr. Griffiths,

fiths, snug in that closet? Surely either the lover or his patron will not neglect her in her distress."

"Why you seem to have a familiar spirit, Mr. Martin; else how came you even to suspect I ever concealed letters in that closet?"

"I have at least a very trusty agent, my dear woman, whom you will never discover, nor upon whom your suspicions can never fall," taking from his pocket farmer Griffiths's letter, to announce the departure of William. "Have you any recollection of this letter having once upon a time lain upon the top of that punch-bowl?"

The landlady really looked startled; she turned it over, then said—"Indeed I do particularly remember that letter; the post-mark Bristol; and I had never seen the handwriting before, and I certainly did lay it upon that punch-bowl; therefore how, in the name of wonder, did it come into your possession? I recollect its

its being missing, and as I could not produce it, I never mentioned it; so I lost the postage, which I hope you mean to pay me, though I will not ask you for the money if you will let me read it."

"That you shall do, and receive the postage besides—not to mention any trinket you may fancy, if you in return will let me see the next letter that comes for Mrs. Harland."

"Agreed, if you will ensure my not being brought into any trouble."

"I give you my honour that I will guard against that," putting Griffiths's letter into her hands, well aware that she would be very little the wiser when she had done so, as Griffiths had too strictly adhered to the cautions which he had received, to enable any but those acquainted with the business to understand his meaning.

"Well, now I am just as wise as I was before.—'W—— M—— has left us—hope he is with you—James is gone for a soldier,'

soldier,' and so on. Why what does all this rhodomontade tend to? what a cock and a bull story about nothing! Pray let me into the light of it, my dear Mr. Martin, for it is all Greek to me."

"Nay, you only asked to read the letter; you did not bargain for an explanation."

"Never mind that: now we have gone so far, I give you my word that you shall see the next letter that comes through my hands addressed to Mrs. Harland; but remember, you must neither keep nor open it, because I am answerable for all letters that are left here reaching their owners in safety: so now explain the meaning of this Bristol letter."

"I thought you had more penetration, my dear woman; W—— M—— stands for a love-child, I suspect, who has, or had, played truant, and was supposed to have joined *mamma*. James may be another; but of that I am less sure: do you understand the riddle?"

"Yes,

"Yes, yes, I am up to the business; but how came you to be wiser than the deceased? though once when he was drunk he talked of a child, and his wife."

"Poor man! and you wish to take advantage of my regard for you, and of my easy temper; perhaps I may have been employed by either the gentleman or the lady, to watch over this proof of their intimacy."

"Not by the lady, I dare swear; however, I will not be too curious; we may understand one another better before we part. You know I can keep a secret, and I am always ready to oblige a friend, without fee or reward."

"Your generosity will only render me more liberal: you shall not suffer for your disinterestedness: my promises are sacred. As you may like to please yourself, pray accept these five guineas, to purchase any thing you want, and in return, do tell me whether Mrs. Harland has not already written to London?"

"Last

"Last night she sent a letter to Mr. William Griffiths, to the usual address, but I could see it contained another, and seemingly a very large one. Knowing that your gentlemen had just left the castle, I was, like you, very curious to know the contents; but she always wafers before she seals, which renders it very difficult to open her letters without its being discovered: as to sealing-wax, the more is used the better; I can easily make that give way: as it was, I could only with much difficulty make out that the enclosed was directed to the earl of Delmont, and to be delivered, I suppose, immediately."

"Now, when can she have an answer to this good missive?"

"It will reach London to-morrow: three days hence she may have an answer by return of post—but it may be the fourth day from hence."

"No matter; only contrive to afford me a glimpse of the contents, and you will render me your debtor to all eternity."

"But

"But suppose it should, as usual, be franked by my lord?"

"What matters? as you can take a peep at the inside, if inclined."

"I was wrong to let you into that secret; but you have such a way of taking one by surprise, that I will see what can be done to oblige you; only, for the love of God, keep the secret, since the letters might be removed from hence; nay, perhaps we might lose our licence."

Martin vowed to be as secret as the grave; and again hinted that a handsome brooch would set off her handkerchief. Thus, by flattering her vanity, and rendering it conducive to her interest to gratify his curiosity, he hoped to obtain some intelligence which might enable the gentlemen to decide how they ought to proceed. The no longer reserved landlady very freely discussed Mrs. Harland's character, who was feared and disliked by all the neighbourhood; but as her late husband and she were known to be related to

the

the earl, of whom our hostess spoke in the highest terms, no one dare openly affront the lady. Mr. Tremayne, the law steward, always treated her with the greatest respect, and she frequently spent weeks at his house. No other person would probably have been able to save Mrs. Gwynne from a prison but Mrs. Harland, whose connexion with the ministry rendered her all-powerful; since no one acquainted with the real circumstances were inclined to acquit the old woman of having at least intended to do her husband a serious mischief. Martin did not tell the gentlemen the hopes he entertained of having silenced the laudlady's scruples, for fear the expected letter might travel express, or by some other conveyance which might defeat his schemes; he therefore merely told them he had opened his batteries, but could not yet tell whether the place would surrender at discretion.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIV.

THE preparations for the funeral were carried on under Martin's direction: every respect was to be paid the deceased; but so far from London, many shewy appendages were obliged to be dispensed with. Mrs. Harland received no one but her tradespeople, and did not interfere with the undertaker and his men; but Mrs. Gwynne told the former, that her late master had always expressed a wish to be buried by torchlight, as he thought it more solemn; and she wished his brother to be informed of the circumstance. Of course what she had said was repeated to Martin, that he might give in the report to Mr. Harland. He did so; and as that gentleman thought the old woman might speak truth, and as it did not appear that the

the plotting widow could have any end to answer by his acceding to what he was to suppose was the wish of the deceased, he desired orders might be given accordingly.

No letter arrived by return of post; but on the fourth evening after the decease of Mr. Harland, Mrs. Gwynne came to the Dun Cow, to request Mrs. Lanfrydd would send any letters for her mistress up to the castle the moment they arrived, as she was very anxious for an answer to one she had lately written.

Mrs. Lanfrydd promised to attend to madam's wishes. Martin, who was, as usual, in the bar, walked some part of the way home with the old woman, who was very curious to know whether the gentlemen meant to leave the village as soon as the funeral was over. The valet supposed they did; since as they had dispensed with a coroner's inquest, he did not believe they either wished or intended to see Mrs. Harland

Harland in Wales: they had certainly adopted other plans, which must finally induce her to afford them the satisfaction they required.

Mrs. Gwynne supposed he alluded to the child, adding, with a meaning look—"She does not seem to fear Mr. Harland."

"I dare say not, as she cannot be aware how well he is informed; yet surely she cannot flatter herself that his late brother suffered him to remain in ignorance of her having a *protégé*, who has been, or was to have been, sent out of England. I only wonder more summary means were not adopted to remove such a thorn, as the youth may yet prove: however, this does not concern you, Mrs. Gwynne; I acquit you of having any thing to answer for upon that score: so tell me, did the deceased ever really express a wish to be buried by torch-light?"

"Very often; he thought it more solemn, he used to say; but did not expect he

he should be so favoured, else, with his own good will, he would not be placed in the grave before midnight."

"Then depend upon it his wishes will be complied with: so pray what are your lady's plans after the funeral?"

"I am sure I cannot inform you: she is, and always was, mighty close: once she said she should never leave Eskdale; but that was too good news to be true."

"Why so? you must pay your court to her to induce her to continue in that mind;" wishing her a good evening, as he began to suspect the old woman was merely the puppet of her mistress, who had hoped through her means to fathom the gentlemen's real plans, and future intentions. This he told Mrs. Lanfrydd when he returned, declaring that he was more anxious than ever for the arrival of the expected letter.

"You have so raised my curiosity, Mr. Martin, that I will run every risk to oblige you. Madam is evidently afraid her let-

ters should remain any time here now, therefore she must have some strange secrets. Your gentlemen suffer their letters to remain for hours in my possession after they are written, and don't require those they receive to be carried up to their bedrooms. She never sends her letters till the bag is making up, and was always, when at home, all anxiety to receive her answers. Depend upon it she is as deep as Garrick."

"As old Nick himself. I should not wonder her worthless confident were here to-morrow morning as soon as the post."

"I can be a match for her if she is: you and I have only to turn out a little sooner; the man who leaves the letters here in the morning calls for those that are to go about ten o'clock in the evening. To oblige me, he will call here an hour sooner to-morrow: I can make the approaching funeral an excuse for my request. Leave me alone to manage matters."

"Any

"Any bribe you may choose to hold out, I will be answerable for."

"Two glasses of spirits will make him do any thing;" and thus it was settled.

Martin suffered her to make her private arrangements with the postman, who came into all her plans; and it may be supposed he did not oversleep himself in the morning; but he did not make his appearance till the man was gone, when having fastened the parlour door, the landlady exclaimed—"Here it is; and what is very unusual, it is franked by my lord himself. A Mr. —— generally franked madam's letters, let them come from whom they might."

"But as the lady wrote, you say, to this great man, who is her relation, where is the wonder?" was the reply; "so let me see you display your dexterity: this is a fine large seal."

While he was speaking, she applied a very thin instrument, which she had previously heated, to the wax, and in an in-

stant raised the seal very neatly.—" Fortunately here is no wafer," she cried. " My lord did not take the same precaution she always does. Well, I have never had above a dozen of his franks go through my hands. Mr. Tremayne's letters are not left here."

The impatient Martin snatched a very long unsealed missive out of her hand, which she had taken out of the cover, saying—" We have no time to lose," hastily reading it over to his companion: he then requested she would leave him to make a few memorandums, when he would re-enclose it; and he would make himself answerable for all being safe.

Mrs. Lanfrydd made no objections; and as he was master of shorthand, he copied the whole in so little time, she was sure he could not have written much; but having replaced the seal, with even more dexterity than she had opened it, Martin paid her many compliments upon her skill, declaring, that had he not been privy to the circum-

circumstance, he should have sworn it had never been opened.

The maid was immediately dispatched to the castle, where Mrs. Harland was eagerly waiting her approach. She thanked her for coming so early, and tore the letter open, beginning to read, even before she thought of giving her the accustomed twopence—till seeing she remained in waiting, she threw her sixpence, desiring her to keep the change, which, considering her general disposition, the maid thought very generous. Her return convinced her mistress and Martin that no suspicions had been entertained of their having previously read her dispatch, which the landlady had but very imperfectly understood, and which Martin explained not exactly agreeable to his belief. As soon as the gentlemen met at breakfast, the valet produced what he had written, and was desired to read his production, which he did as follows:

"G—— was from home when your letter arrived, which prevented my receiving it so early as I ought to have done; and to avoid any farther delay, I shall frank and dispatch this myself, since no time must now be lost in removing W—— M——. Your surprise at finding the castle so strongly garrisoned when you returned, was very natural; though it was no more than you deserved, for having been so absurd as to leave home, knowing the precarious state of your husband, and how much your presence was required at Eskdale; but I shall not repeat what I told you when we met, but merely observe, that it would have been much to your interest to have considered even the opinion of your uninformed neighbours, who will be as ready as your late husband's guests to descant upon your want of feeling. You were perfectly right in ridding the house of such troublesome, not to say impertinent, visitors: your being at home would have prevented their gaining admittance.

mittance. All things considered, Gwynne seems to have done her duty. Of course the deceased had contrived to correspond with the *trader*, who can bribe as high as I can; and money frequently removes more scruples than any hopes of patronage which may be held out. As to *Gil Blas*, as you have properly named him, he is no servant, but some clever fellow, who seems to be a match even for W—— G——: you cannot be sufficiently upon your guard against a man of that description, who must have had some motive for accompanying you to town, when you took your last ill-advised journey. You are never sufficiently upon your guard, else could he have traced you to your lodgings, or have given you so fully to understand who was your *solicitor?* He seems exactly calculated to make fools of women, and to deceive the wisest of us men. I thought I was followed that evening: I only wish I had turned short upon the fellow, I would soon have brought him

over to our interest. You never mentioned having travelled with any particular person, or I should have guessed there was some scheme in view. Keen as you are, and always alive to your own interest, you have of late acted very absurdly. Let them order the funeral, and be at all the expence; only remember, grant them no personal interview. After the hints you say *Gil Blas* threw out, you cannot be sufficiently upon your guard: excuse yourself from seeing these mighty officious people, under the plea of your recent loss rendering it improper you should receive visitors. Do not commit yourself by the slightest imprudence, or deviation from my orders, as you value my future protection.

"*Foolish the Fifth* has not left a will, I suppose; indeed, as he had nothing to leave, it would have been mere waste paper. I shall not suffer you to administer to his effects, as he may have contracted debts you might be obliged to pay. You shall

shall be amply provided for. I hope the *affectionate brother* will conform to the wishes of the deceased, and indulge him with an evening, if not a midnight funeral: that was a bright thought of yours, as it will enable you to leave Eskdale at least ten or twelve hours before the *friends*. No difficulties can arise at Broomfields: a present supply, and promises of future protection and assistance, will enable you to remove the lad at a moment's notice. A very advantageous situation may have offered for him, and not a moment must be lost if you would secure it for him: but you have paved the way for his removal, and the money which was destined for the funeral expences will more than suffice. Would you believe it, I really feel interested in the youth's future welfare, owing to the report of W—— G——, who spent a few days in the neighbourhood of Westbury last summer, to recruit his health. I had forbidden his visiting his brother; but according to his account,

W—— M—— was considered a prodigy, and was noticed by all the gentry, and others in the environs: he brought me a specimen of his skill in turning, which surprised me; indeed, from all he learnt, I am convinced that he will do the greatest honour to my recommendation; therefore I propose sending him out to India, as a writer; he shall sail in the next ship that clears for that part of the globe.

"Since *Murray* is once more in Britain, G—— and I have settled that you are for the present to bring your *protégé*, and to take up your own abode at his house in Westminster, since for the present you must not be seen even near your own lodgings, as we cannot be aware of what may be in agitation. Do not travel in a stage: take the Gloucester road when you leave Wales; then you may change your road, and cross the Passage, which may prevent their tracing your route: from Broomfields cross into the Salisbury road; and should you suspect you are followed, take

take four horses, and cross the country again. At Salthill you shall find a letter, containing further instructions. You must be very deficient in *tact* if you cannot reach London without having been traced or followed: but you shall, I repeat, receive your final orders at Salthill.

"To stop the mouths of Morgan and Gwynne, give the former the wardrobe of the deceased; Tremayne pays him his wages: and promise the old woman ten shillings a-week during your absence. Let her dismiss her assistant; the fewer of them, the less likely they will make mischief.

"Yours sincerely.

"Burn as soon as read."

"Well," cried the colonel, "the earl seems to have some feeling for his son: I do hope we shall bring him to terms."

"My fears that he will prove too many for us, fully keep pace with my hopes," replied

replied Mr. Harland; "but it should appear he is not aware that William Mansel has left Broomfields. Notwithstanding Mrs. Harland set out for London upon making the discovery, she has certainly never mentioned what had occurred, possibly that she might continue to draw upon my lord for his maintenance, &c. She will now plead, in excuse for her silence, that she made no doubt of the youth's returning, therefore was unwilling to occasion her beloved cousin any uneasiness."

"I dare say the artful jade has a tale ready cut and dried for his lordship's ear," rejoined the colonel: "nor really do I consider it worth our while to watch her motions, since the dear boy is removed out of her reach. Our supineness may lead her to suppose we are either her dupes, or very indifferent respecting the fate of the youth."

"Oh, let her go, when and how she likes; she will be forthcoming if the earl requires

requires her presence; she must now acknowledge William has left Westbury; I think his lordship will not spare her."

Martin felt assured that she would proceed straight to Salthill; though she might, upon second thoughts, call at Griffiths's, and induce them to declare the boy had but just left them; at all events, the earl would pay for postchaises.

"No doubt," resumed the colonel; "the midnight funeral, you see, was to answer some purpose—of what nature I cannot exactly fathom."

"We shall discover," observed Mr. Harland; "however, as we have ordered that the body should not be moved before sunset, let matters take their course. She may proceed at her own time and at her own leisure to London, since it would prove a useless expence and trouble to follow her, as we know where she is going to take up her abode; and, no doubt, the earl will bring her forward, if required; and

and we also know where to find the Griffithses at a moment's notice."

Martin was quite of Mr. Harland's opinion; and as he was more than liberal towards Mrs. Lanfrydd, she promised him the sight of every letter directed to Eskdale.

The undertaker, when he attended to receive his final orders, told Martin that Mrs. Harland had never chosen to see him. Mother Gwynne affected to look sorrowful, and Kate grinned behind her back; altogether they were a strange set, and no credit to any decent house.

The funeral took place at the appointed time, and was as handsome as one a had ever been seen in Wales; the two gentlemen attended as mourners, as did doctor Price and Mr. Tremayne, who were much gratified by the tokens of respect they received; and according to the orders he had received, Mr. Owen the undertaker brought his bill to the Dun Cow the morning

ing after the last duties had been paid the deceased.—" So, Mr. Martin," were his first words, " madam is already off, pack and baggage."

" You do not mean it!" cried the valet.

" Fact, I give you my honour; she set off in high style, as you shall hear. A drunken rascal, in my employ, was called from home yesterday morning to see his sick father, who resides about seven miles from hence; I gave him leave of absence, upon his promising to return for the funeral; he however got drunk to drown sorrow, as his father was dead when he arrived: he was however making a start to stagger home between ten and eleven at night, when who should pull up to the very alehouse where he had been drinking, but old Morgan—you know him—with madam, in a light cart; as it was bright moonlight, he hailed the old fellow, inquiring where he was going. Morgan affected not to know him, when the stage-coach they had come to meet drove up, when

when madam inquired whether she could have an inside place. The coachman said yes; so after two large trunks and some small parcels were stowed within and without, she proceeded on her journey, and Morgan gave Tudor a cast home, where he arrived about midnight. The old gardener told him that the funeral was over, and that madam had received letters, which had obliged her to set off immediately for London. I could hardly believe this strange story; indeed I suspected the sot had either seen double, or had invented the tale; so I made an excuse for calling at the castle before I came here, and Mrs. Gwynne told me, unasked, that her lady was gone to London upon business respecting her late master's will. I made no observation upon the indecency of her proceedings, and could only rejoice she was not to be pay-mistress; but I did inquire when she would return.—'Very soon,' she replied. Now this did not accord with the baggage she has taken; but

but I did not choose to hold any further parley with that worthless old wretch; only I thought it right to let the present Mr. Harland know of her departure; should she never return, no one will regret her absence."

Martin agreed she had acted very strangely, since she might as well have taken daylight for her journey; settling very liberally with the man, who was profuse in his thanks and good wishes, and took his leave, very much impressed in favour of both masters and man.

Mrs. Lanfrydd, who had been present during the undertaker's visit, was highly offended at having been so neglected by her former patroness—"Ay, ay, now I may go hang for her! yes, yes, she has something very black to answer for, I will be bound; but mark my words, Mr. Martin, it will come home to her sooner or later; she will make a clean breast before she dies. Surely my past services were worth a small remembrance; for she will never

never return here—the letter for that! I only wish I dare speak more openly. A pretty thing for a lady, as she calls herself, to be jaunting about the night her poor husband was laid in the ground, a vile cocatrice! Only leave me your direction, Mr. Martin, and I will write you all I can pick up about this widow bewitched, and that limb of the devil mother Gwynne; a sweet pair they are; pity they should ever be separated."

While she was thus venting her spleen, Martin, who had reechoed all she said, went to give in his report to the gentlemen, who were more amused than surprised at Mrs. Harland's departure, rather enjoying the having frightened her into making her exit so shabbily. Like most cunning people, she had overshot her mark, and excited more curiosity and animadversion by her silly attempt at privacy, than had she set off at noonday in a chaise. As they knew where to seek her in London, they cared very little how she travelled

led. Having finally decided that the late Mr. Harland's bequest, or rather gift, to his grandson, must be the ostensible reason for addressing the great man, and having nothing now to detain them at Eskdale, they set out on their return to Westbury; Mr. Harland having agreed to spend a fortnight with the colonel in his rural abode; Martin was in consequence sent forward to make the necessary arrangements for their reception.

CHAPTER XV.

Farmer Abinger was very happy to see so excellent a lodger again, and had made every arrangement to render him and his guest comfortable. It had been settled in their privy council that no notice should be taken respecting what had occurred during their absence, and that Martin should

should not renew his visits at Griffiths's, or make any inquiries respecting his family; though he was to treasure up any intelligence he might glean from indifferent people.

The morning after their return proving very fine, Mr. Harland said after breakfast—" Shall you have any objection, colonel, to accompany me to Mr. Arlington's? he has a house between this and Clifton; and I have provided myself with a letter for him from a Swiss house in London, with whom I have had dealings, and with whom he is also connected, since I am very curious to see his youngest daughter, who is, or rather was, as you have heard, a most wonderful favourite of Edward Melfort, the name my nephew now bears; to the first his grandfather gave him a right at his christening, the other he derives from a purchase baron Villars has made for him of an estate, which gives its name to its proprietor. The baron managed every thing—I only found the money; we considered

sidered this as a proper precaution when he removed to Switzerland, and I am sincerely rejoiced we were so provident, as I think the statesman will leave no stone unturned to discover whither he is gone."

The colonel could only applaud the generosity of his friend, observing that he considered his mother's fortune as merely held in trust for him—"But we will not enter upon that subject at present," he continued. "I am as impatient to see Ellen Arlington as you appear; report speaks highly in her favour; and should our joint *protégé*, as I consider him as much my future care as he ought to be yours, be ever reinstated in his rights, perhaps her father's large fortune might reconcile even the haughty earl Delmont to the match, admitting their early attachment should prove permanent, though absence is not considered favourable to love."

"Why their mutual regard hardly deserves that name, and I think it most probable

bable each will make another choice, since should my nephew be acknowledged by his father, that may prove a serious obstacle, as I am not so sanguine respecting the old merchant's money smoothing their path, since he is a vulgar old fellow, and as positive and overbearing in his way, as the earl ever was, where he dare display his natural temper; and should our hopes of establishing the dear boy's rights be frustrated, he will probably spend his life in Switzerland, and intermarry with some good family of that nation."

They continued to discuss these probabilities as they proceeded towards Clifton, having been directed by their landlord to Fir Grove, as Mr. Arlington had named his large but old-fashioned house, which stood midway between Westbury and Clifton. The mansion appeared handsome as they approached, and the lawn in front was enclosed on each side by very lofty walls, which seemed covered with fine fruit trees in full bearing; a sunk fence secured

cured it in front, and a pair of large iron gates marked the grand entrance. They heard some one talking as they drew near, and now perceived a small door in the wall next them, appropriated to the gardeners and other people at work in the grounds, through which an elderly man, leaning upon a crutch-stick, now issued, followed by another in a blue apron, whom he thus apostrophized—"You are a stupid fool! I will have a dozen spring guns set upon the premises; none of your mantraps for me! young as my daughters are, there are people who would fancy it a good joke."

As our friends were by this time within a dozen yards of the speaker, whom they guessed was Mr. Arlington, they drew nearer; while he, aware that he had been overheard, addressed them with what he meant to be an attempt at pleasantry—"You, gentlemen, do not look as if you were planning how best to scale my walls, which some rogues did last night, who have

have robbed me of some of my choicest fruit; I only wish I could trace them, they should remember trespassing upon the premises of Robert Arlington."

"I am very sorry you have been so unfortunate, Mr. Arlington," replied the merchant. "I am the bearer of a letter from Mr. Du Verney, of the firm of —— & ——, with whom, like yourself, I am in the habit of doing business."

"I am most happy to see any friend of Mr. Du Verney, and a *brother chip* must be doubly welcome. Pray walk in, gentlemen. I have long had dealings with our joint friend, who is a most liberal, excellent man; none of your speculators; like us Bristol men, he dislikes dash: we make it a rule to keep all those people down if we can; let them go to Liverpool, if they want to play at speculation; slow and sure is our maxim. Is that gentleman in business?"

"No, sir; he is in the army," introducing the colonel as a near relation.

Mr.

Mr. Arlington had led the way through the small door, and upon looking round, again lamented the serious loss he had sustained, declaring that the plants which had been taken were worth their weight in gold, since they were most of them exotics, which were hardly to be met with in England—" There is where the rogues made their entrance," pointing to where the wall had evidently given way. It appeared that a violent wind had forced it out of its level, and that it would have fallen into the garden, had it not been propped up and otherwise secured.—" I meant to have taken the old wall down in the autumn; and now it will only be locking the door after the mischief is done; I was by no means aware of its very crazy state. My stupid ass never perceived any thing was missing till within this half hour, and he could not conceive how the rogues had got in, a fool! when I immediately discovered their footsteps under the breach; there, if you look up, gentle-

men, you may see where they came from; that prop seemed placed on purpose to facilitate their entrance; I speak in the plural, as there are different foot-marks; they were no strangers to the premises, I will be bound, probably friends of the gardener; I only hope they have succeeded so well they mean to come again—they shall find me prepared for their reception. I prefer spring guns to men-traps—what is your opinion, gentlemen?"

"I cannot say I am very partial to either," rejoined the colonel: "a caution to that effect may prevent depredations; but I should not feel comfortable were I to be accessary to even a rogue's death."

"There we differ, colonel; I should think I had done the country a service. Mrs. Arlington and the girls have gone in; they have, like me, been grieving over our loss, as many of the plants were theirs; but when I began upon Meadows, they walked away. I don't know how Mrs. Arlington manages; but, without scolding

scolding half so much as I do, she is much more attended to; she preaches patience; and when I told her this morning that I was more provoked upon her account and the girls than my own, as I may not be here this time twelvemonths, she assured me, as did Ellen, they had rather all their plants had been gone than have seen me out of sorts. They mean well, Mr. Harland. As women go, I have been fortunate in my choice: Mrs. Arlington has convinced me that it is better to have a fortune in than with a wife. My daughters are good girls; Ellen used to be too giddy; silly girl, she has taken some strange fancies into her head that I cannot remove; though she does not go untold of her folly: Anne, my eldest, is more prudent, and will make the wisest selection when she chooses a husband; they have only to look above themselves—they only want rank; I will give them money, if they marry to please me, to purchase a title."

"But does rank always ensure happiness?" asked Mr. Harland. "I have seen many melancholy instances of the contrary."

Mr. Arlington was not sufficiently acquainted with his guest's family history to induce him to drop the subject; though he agreed at last that he had the best of the argument, leading the way through a large gloomy hall into a very pleasant morning room, where they found Mrs. Arlington and her daughters, to whom the guests were introduced as friends of Mr. Du Verney, when the old gentleman called for sandwiches.

Mrs. Arlington was a very handsome, pleasing woman, who did not appear to be more than five-and-thirty, though she was three years older: Miss Arlington was a fine girl of fifteen, rather too much of the woman, and more like her father than her mother; her countenance denoted pride, not unblended with ill-nature; but as she did not wish to display either to

their

their present guests, they certainly saw her to advantage: but the youthful Ellen, now in her thirteenth year, exactly answered the opinion they had formed of her figure, countenance, and temper: had sir Thomas Lawrence required a model for a Hebe, he could not have made a more judicious selection, though, as the gentlemen had heard, a shade of melancholy was very discernible on her countenance and in her manners. Mrs. Arlington saw that they both admired this lovely child of nature, and felt the gratified pride of an excellent mother, since, though she was apparently strictly impartial, Ellen had long been her decided favourite.

The first compliments being over, Mr. Arlington again reverted to his recent loss. Mrs. Arlington was happy to inform him that some of their most choice plants had escaped the rogues' notice, from being placed under the windows of the house.

"Yes, Ellen's Indian shrub remains in *statu quo*," said her sister, in an ironical

tone; "I am fearful she would also have drowned herself had that been missing."

Mrs. Arlington gave her elder daughter a look of reproach; while Ellen's deep blushes and starting tears, shewed how much she felt the allusion.

The colonel, to afford her time to recover herself, requested to see this eastern production.

"I will do the honours of it," cried Anne, opening a glass door, and leading the way, followed more slowly by her mother and sister. "There it is, colonel; for my own part, I see no beauty in it; it exactly resembles those shrubs you continually see upon old Indian screens; but Ellen, who is a great botanist, saw the parent stem of her darling at Badminton two years ago, and she would have bribed the gardener, who shewed the grounds, to give her a slip; but he proved deaf to her entreaties, when a lad, whom my mother kindly patronized, having heard Ellen deplore her disappointment, by some means

or

or other, probably by the same method as the thieves have possessed themselves of my father's rarities, procured a slip, and having nursed it in a pot during the winter, he produced it in the spring, and Ellen sets the greatest store by it, as it is supposed the donor came to an untimely end."

"When you relate the story of that plant in future, Anne," said her mother, "pray do not embellish your narrative with fictions; William Mansel candidly told us how he had procured the plant, and you know that his veracity was never called in question. Mr. Carter was privy to the transaction, and assisted him to rear and nurse this very plant, being quite as anxious to gratify your sister as his *protégé*, whom I feel assured is now living; at all events, I desire you would never again revert to the subject."

At this moment, when it is more than probable Miss Anne would have given the colonel a specimen of her temper, she

was summoned by a servant, who informed her Miss Curtis was waiting to receive her orders. At any other time the milliner would have been obliged to wait her leisure; but she now instantly obeyed the summons, merely indulging in a spiteful remark respecting her having offended beyond forgiveness; adding—" I really must cease to employ this second paragon, Ellen, as I am not allowed to return any thing upon her hands."

Mrs. Arlington, too angry to pass her insolence off in silence, followed her into the house, where Mr. Arlington was descanting upon Russian hemp and tallow so eagerly to Mr. Harland, that he was not aware they were alone.

The artless Ellen being thus left with the colonel, by way of obtaining a short *tête-à-tête*, he affected to admire a distant shrub, which induced her to propose walking towards it; and having rather recovered her spirits, with the innocence of her age she mentioned William Mansel, declaring

claring that she much feared she had, very unfortunately, been the occasion of his leaving the country, if nothing worse had befallen him. The colonel appeared so much interested in her narrative, and so anxious for a further explanation, that she detailed what had led to his intimacy with their family, declaring that he did not seem like the same person after his friend and tutor had left Westbury: a Mr. Rivers had also been very kind to him, and he had also left the country.—"My mother," she continued, "redoubled her kindness towards him, in hope of making him more comfortable, as she had long thought he was much to be pitied in being subjected to the control of those vulgar beings the Griffithses, with whom he used to acknowledge he could less than ever assimilate, after he had been so kindly noticed by Mr. Carter and our family; but somehow my father seemed no longer inclined to suffer our intimacy; he was continually throwing out hints to poor William's dis-

advantage: if he had been such a *none-such* as my mother fancied, Mr. Carter, or Mr. Rivers, would have done something for him; perhaps they hoped he should provide for him; but there were poor enough in Bristol; he did not choose to interfere with strangers. You do not know, sir, how much I used to feel hurt to hear him talk so; and whenever poor William called, he treated him so coolly, the poor lad was quite grieved, though he never came empty handed; and it was from him I gleaned the little knowledge of botany I possess. He made me such a beautiful herbal, and gave me so many other specimens of fossils and sea weeds—indeed, sir, he was a very extraordinary youth."

"So I have been assured by those who knew him best," replied the colonel. "But is it true that your father kicked him out of the house the last time you saw him?"

"You have not been absolutely misinformed, sir," replied the blushing Ellen. "I have never been really happy since that unfortunate

unfortunate evening: the poor youth came here just at dusk, to bring me a beautiful ivory toy of his turning; he looked very pale, and was in wretched spirits. I asked him what had of late so depressed him; Curtis, our then maid, was present; he burst into tears, and sobbing as if his heart would break, he did venture to salute me, for the last time he told me; when unfortunately my father, in consequence of a hint from my sister, who perhaps meant well—I might have been too kindly familiar to William, who I am sure did not mean to offend me; be that as it may, I never saw my father in such a passion; he struck the poor youth, and I did not escape: poor Curtis! he abused her, oh so cruelly! of course poor William did not require twice bidding to get out of the house; I was only afraid he would have raised his hand against my father in return, as his eyes flashed fire; but for my sake, yes, he said so, he walked away; and as I was well aware of his state of mind,

oppressed as he was with grief before he met with such an insult, I was not much surprised when I heard he had left Westbury; and within the week a youth was found drowned, who perfectly answered his description. My mother and Curtis have repeatedly assured me it was not him; but I cannot divest myself of the opinion that he was rendered desperate by various circumstances; as I was also obliged to write him a very cruel letter; but my dear mother took care to prevent that from having much effect; still as he was already miserable, and did not seem to have a friend in the world, I feel assured that I have much to answer for upon his account."

"Then allow me to assure you that I exonerate you from all blame. May I depend upon your secrecy? we shall be summoned in another moment; but pledge me your honour that you will never reveal what I may tell you respecting William Mansel, since it would be doing him an

an irreparable injury, and I should be severely censured for having admitted you into my confidence."

The half-breathless, amazed, and delighted Ellen, made him every promise he could require.

"Then be assured that William Mansel is living and well: his grief when you last met was occasioned by his knowing that he was upon the point of leaving Westbury; more I am not at liberty to disclose; and remember, William's existence, and future well-being, depend upon your keeping my communication secret. You will meet again, I prognosticate, when even your father may encourage the intimacy."

Ellen's heartfelt joy displayed itself in her eyes, and on her countenance; she mentally returned thanks to Heaven, and then in the warmest terms expressed her gratitude to the colonel, who requested she would calm her spirits; therefore, making a great effort, she resumed some degree of

of composure, ere Miss Arlington came forward to summon the colonel to eat a sandwich.

CHAPTER XVI.

An elegant morning repast was set out with great taste, in a room which seemed appropriated to the young ladies, whose drawings, writing, and work, occupied various tables.—"Mrs. Arlington," said the old gentleman, "why do you suffer the girls thus to litter this room?"

"Why, dear papa," exclaimed Miss Arlington, "a room is not considered furnished now without desks, portfolios, and work-boxes: pray make some allowance for the change of fashions since you were young."

"This is how I am answered, colonel: *fashion* (I hate the very word) is made an excuse

excuse to encumber every table, cabinet, and chimney-piece with all sorts of useless lumber; and I am half ruined in frames to display the productions of my daughters. I never had any taste for drawing, and think a good portrait worth all these landscapes and Dutch figures; but Mrs. Arlington spoils the girls, and fancies because she sees great beauties in their performances, other people will be equally indulgent."

Mr. Harland and the colonel plainly perceived that he was no less inclined to be proud of his daughters, and certainly various proofs of Ellen's genius were truly deserving of the praises they bestowed upon them. She particularly excelled in flowers, shells, and fossils, and had succeeded extremely well in catching the resemblance of both her father and mother in water colours. The old gentleman had objected to her painting in oils, as he feared it might hurt her health. Not to create any jealousy between the sisters, the visi-

tors

tors bestowed their praises very equally, though they both gave the palm to the youthful Ellen. Miss Arlington, who was a very fine performer, next played and sung, for their amusement, and met with her due meed of applause.

"Now, Ellen, give us one of your ballads, child," cried her father; "they suit my taste best: your sister is the finest musician, but I understand your songs better than her Italian bravuras."

Ellen instantly sat down to the instrument, and sung, with real taste and feeling—

> "And are you sure the news is true,
> And are you sure he's well?"

Colonel Murray perfectly understood her meaning, and warmly applauded her performance. Mr. Harland was no less delighted, declaring that she sung with a feeling and pathos he had never heard equalled.

"Why, yes, she tunes a ballad very prettily,"

prettily," said her father; "though she is a mere beginner when compared to her sister."

Mrs. Arlington agreed with her husband, but evidently preferred the simple singing of her youngest daughter to the more scientific efforts of her elder.

Two hours soon slipped away, when the gentlemen rose to depart. Mr. Arlington wishing to display his hospitality, insisted upon their fixing an early day for dining with them. Mrs. Arlington so warmly seconded the invitation, that their guests agreed to spend the next Thursday with them. Ellen, whose spirits had risen almost above par, would accompany them to the great gates, and her sister chose to be equally polite, which prevented her from repeating her thanks to the colonel; nor indeed would she have reverted to the subject nearest her heart before Mr. Harland; but her eloquent eyes spoke volumes to the worthy colonel's heart, who rejoiced in the idea of seeing her again.

Mr.

Mr. Harland was eloquent in her praise as they proceeded homeward, but feared she had forgotten his nephew, she seemed so gay and animated.

"Did you think her so when we first joined the ladies?" asked the colonel.

"No; she then seemed much more grave; I meant, had an opportunity offered, to have hinted to her, under the seal of secrecy, that her playfellow was living."

"I only anticipated your kind intention," relating what had passed between the mother and daughters, and what Ellen had told him respecting William Mansel, adding—"I could not suffer her to continue in so uneasy a state of suspense, and I have not put it in her power to do our cause any mischief were she so inclined; but I have too good an opinion of her to doubt her discretion."

"If I may believe Edward, as I shall always in future style my nephew, she possesses every virtue under the sun; and

as

as to her discretion, I dare say he has now and then put it to the test. Now I have seen her, I sincerely wish they may meet again: some years hence they will be better able to judge of the nature of their regard. Arlington is a sour crab, but certainly fond and proud of his family. Miss Anne seems very much like him."

"She is very spiteful, and very jealous of our favourite, who has a stanch friend in her mother; and even her father seems to appreciate her superior merit."

"Yet he would rather see her miserable with a titled man, than happy with an inferior in rank."

"Heaven, in its mercy, may frustrate many of his ambitious views; though should Edward be reinstated in his rights, I am fearful the objections to the match will not arise with Mr. Arlington: however, this is diving too far into futurity. I am not sorry to see the rural bow window of my sitting-parlour, as I am really fatigued with my morning's excursion."

"I am

"I am fearful I have trespassed too far upon your politeness, my dear colonel: you are not so able to walk twenty miles as I fancy myself to be."

This was said as they entered the house, where they found Martin laying the cloth, as they were old-fashioned enough to dine at three. A small roll of paper was lying in the bow window, which caught the colonel's eye as he entered the room.—"What have we here?" he exclaimed, unrolling the paper.

Mr. Harland, who was close to his elbow, appeared lost in amaze, while he inquired —"How came this here?"

The colonel looked at Martin for an explanation, who appeared very much gratified by Mr. Harland's surprise.—"Have you any idea, sir, whom that washed drawing was intended to represent?"

"Any idea! I never saw so striking a likeness as this drawing bears to Edward Melfort: it was certainly done for him; but

but by whom?—how came it into your hands, Martin?"

"I can very easily satisfy you, sir. I had promised to repeat my visits to Miss Curtis; and as you did not seem to want me, sir," turning to the colonel, "I proceeded to Clifton immediately after breakfast, and fortunately found her alone. Having renewed our acquaintance, she told me she had supposed I had left the neighbourhood. I acknowledged I had been from home, but soon turned the conversation upon the Arlington family. She spoke in the highest terms of Mrs. Arlington and Miss Ellen, adding, 'she was going to send a bonnet to Miss Arlington, who had since her return from town been more civil to her; but she is as spiteful as ever to dear Miss Ellen, who is worth a thousand of her, though a mere child, in comparison: poor love! she frets as much as ever about William Mansel, as neither her mother nor I can persuade her he did not commit suicide.'—'How unfor-

unfortunate,' I replied, 'no tidings have been obtained of this much-regretted youth!'—'Indeed it is; I fear the poor child will fret herself into a decline. I had a little private conversation with her last week, as she contrived to leave her mother and sister in the library next door, as she wished to place something she greatly values in my hands, as she feared her sister, who is always prying into what does not concern her, might stumble upon the drawing she committed to my charge, since she can hardly turn her back ere Miss Anne has her nose in her drawers; and this said good drawing is a most excellent likeness of poor William Mansel.' —Knowing how much you gentlemen would be gratified with the sight of this picture, I first requested, as a particular favour, to see it myself, and then with some difficulty obtained leave to shew it to you, sir," looking at his master, "whom I represented as feeling much interested in the fate of so fine a lad, observing, that if

if it was a good likeness, and you should ever chance to stumble upon the original, you might have it in your power to set both hers and Miss Ellen's mind at ease. She was proof against all my eloquence, till I offered to leave fifteen pounds in her hands—all I had about me, and my gold watch, if she would but allow me to shew you the picture, promising to return it before sunset, or to forfeit the whole, hinting that you would not think a pound a large sum, were I to promise her that in return for her complaisance, as you had been rendered very curious respecting the regretted fugitive. My last hint clenched the nail; so here is the portrait, and I am sure you will permit me to keep my word with the fair lady, though what I promised her will be paying dear for peeping."

"I think you have made an excellent bargain, Martin," replied the colonel; "and you shall certainly return the drawing before dark, though I would willingly purchase it at any price; yet I should grieve

grieve to deprive the sweet young artist of what she so highly prizes."

"Like you, colonel, I would give any money for it," said Mr. Harland; "but we must respect the fair Ellen's secret. Does not every feature remind you of the earl, though the expression of the countenance bears more resemblance to our beloved Emily? How could this mere child have taken so wonderful a likeness?"

"*Mr. Melfort,*" replied the valet, "had sat to her about six weeks before he left Westbury, and she put the finishing stroke, from memory, after his departure; and now she would not have it seen, even by her mother, for any money. Miss Curtis had pledged her word never to shew it to any one likely to recognise the original, nor who were at all acquainted with Miss Ellen."

"We will faithfully keep her secret," said the colonel, telling Martin, in return for the gratification he had afforded them,

where

where they had been, and when they were to dine at Mr. Arlington's.

Mr. Harland gave the valet five pounds, desiring him to bring him a watch-ribbon in return, as he wished to reward the milliner for having shewn herself the friend of his insulted nephew. The colonel was no less liberal, telling him to recommend the strictest secrecy to Miss Curtis, as she might depend upon their never mentioning the circumstance.

Need we add, that the late waiting-maid was most agreeably surprised, and truly grateful, promising to let Martin know, should any thing ever transpire respecting the fugitive.

CHAPTER XVII.

Mr. Arlington called the next morning in his carriage, to return the gentlemen's visit, and did acknowledge that their situation was rural and pleasant, and that the rooms were habitable; still he was surprised they had not taken a house, or apartments, at Clifton, as money was no object to either.

"Agreed, my good sir," rejoined the colonel; "but quiet is a great object with me;" enumerating the other various advantages of their abode.

The merchant of course became of his opinion; and on the appointed day the colonel and his brother dined at Fir Grove, where a large company were assembled to meet them, which totally destroyed the pleasure of their visit, as they saw but very

very little of the ladies, and had no opportunity of addressing more than general discourse to their favourite Ellen, who seemed to have recovered her usual gaiety, and whose apropos remarks, when she did speak, met their approbation. The merchant was confined to the house, owing to his misunderstood hospitality, during the ensuing fortnight; at the expiration of which the brothers had intended proceeding to sir Charles Freeman's, who had written a most pressing invitation to Mr. Harland, in return for having been duly made acquainted with all their proceedings. But on the day preceding the one fixed for their departure, the baronet wrote his nephew, that his solitude had been broken in upon by a mere acquaintance, who had taken the advantage of a mere casual Bath invitation, to bring his family to spend a week with him, and he had thought it right to let them know how his house was filled, being aware of the colonel's dislike to strangers, noise, and bustle.

Mr. Harland was equally averse to such introductions; they therefore agreed to postpone their visit, which, as the colonel had resolved to retain his lodgings, as a sort of quiet home, till he had seen a residence more to his mind, occasioned no inconvenience to his host and hostess, who greatly enjoyed the society of Mr. Martin, and were really attached to the colonel.

The week was drawing to a conclusion, when Martin entered the parlour one morning, asking—"May I take the liberty, gentlemen, of reading you a loveletter I have just received? How fortunate our departure was deferred! but pray excuse my boldness, since were not Mrs. Harland mentioned in the tender epistle, I should not have mentioned it."

"I am all impatience to be more *au fait* of your love-secrets, Martin," exclaimed Mr. Harland.

"And I know you too well, Martin," said his master, "to consider you as deficient in respect; so let us hear the letter."

Thus

Thus encouraged, the valet thus began:

" MY DEAR MR. MARTIN,

" No, hang it! that is too familiar, considering that I am married, and you are a very handsome young man; but it shall go: I like to be as good as my word, and I promised to let you know all I could pick up respecting madam Harland, mother Gwynne, and the goings on at the castle. We thought, you know, that madam meant to give the dame the go-by; but they are better friends than ever: so we shall learn nothing from their quarrels. But as I know you are very impatient, I must tell you, a letter in madam's own handwriting, directed to Mrs. Winifred Gwynne, and so forth, arrived this very morning—no frank—post-mark London. You bid me be very particular, and having a little curiosity, and not being very busy, I carried it to the castle myself, as I have frequently seen the old

girl since your departure, and have often laughed at her wanting to persuade me her mistress would soon return into Wales, which sometimes quite provoked her; and at others she seemed almost of my opinion: however, this morning she had her revenge, as she crowed over me finely. When I gave her the letter, I said—'Let me know when you expect madam, and how her lawsuit goes on.' I dare say she would have kept me in the dark, with her own good-will; but she is so poor a scholar, as madam generally sent her orders through Mr. Tremayne, that after spelling over the letter for ever so long, she at last put it into my hands, telling me to read it; and I might shew it the whole village, since it would prove that both madam and all her great friends were convinced that she had been wrongfully accused respecting her husband. I never saw the old woman so high; however, before I proceed with my story, I will copy the letter, as she suffered me to bring it away

away with me, as she thinks it will afford her a triumph over her enemies: but I do not think madam intended it should be made public: this comes of putting fools into your confidence—but here goes:

'MY WORTHY GWYNNE,

'I hardly knew, as I told you when I left Eskdale, how soon I might return there; but as it is now more than probable that I shall be detained some months in town, I am much at a loss for a faithful, trustworthy servant; therefore I desire you would join me in London without delay, as I have it in contemplation to render you comfortable and independent for the rest of your days, by placing you in a most comfortable almshouse. My great friends, who are ever willing to oblige me, have one in view that would exactly suit your purpose; the present tenant is dying, and it is most delightfully situated in the immediate neighbourhood of London. What think

you of two nice rooms, coals, and candles, in addition to half-a-guinea a-week, and a new gown, &c. every year? It is necessary that my friends should see that you are a proper person to be received into this excellent asylum for age and indigence; and as you can have no business to detain you in Wales, I would have you leave Eskdale the same day this reaches you: a few hours will suffice for all your preparations. Morgan can convey you and your box in his cart to the same house where I got into the stage, as a moment's delay may render my recommendation of no avail, and I can no otherwise reward you for your long and tried services: so do not, through your own folly, lose such an opportunity, and such a situation. The house may be at the disposal of the governors of the charity ere you receive this; but time is allowed to prepare it for the person who may be fortunate enough to obtain it; and while it is being put in order, you shall remain with me.

me. You need be under no apprehension for your safety or well-being when you reach London, as I will give you the meeting at the inn, to which the coach I would have you come by drives, should another plan which I have framed for your greater comfort and convenience fail. A gentleman of the first eminence in the law, a particular friend of mine, will, I expect, be at Gloucester when you arrive there, and he will take you under his protection for the rest of the journey: that you may be sure he is the person to whom I have recommended you, he will give you a note from me, when you answer to the name of Gwynne: he knows you by sight, and you may have seen him at Eskdale: be this as it may, you have only to attend to all my directions, and I may venture to assure you that you will be the most fortunate woman in all England: proceed to London, should no one challenge you at Gloucester; as, I repeat, it

now rests with yourself to be most amply provided for.

'Your sincere friend,

'J. H.'

'There, Mrs. Lanfrydd,' she cried, when I had read the letter, 'you see my dear lady has all this time been planning how to reward me for my fidelity: yes, yes, many of those who have dared to call me names, and to abuse me almost to my face, will be glad to visit me when I am settled.'—'Then you mean to leave Eskdale immediately?' I asked.—'To be sure I do; I shall be very glad to turn my back upon the old castle, and still more happy to leave the village.' I could have told her no one would grieve for her loss; so I left her in a high bustle, and sat down to write to you the moment I returned. I will not finish till I can let you know whether she really does mean to follow her lady's advice, who has some deep scheme in view, I dare say; though, to be sure,

sure, she could not more cheaply or easily provide for the old sinner. Four o'clock. She is gone, pack and baggage: she called at my house to take leave of me, and to ask for her dear lady's letter, which it might not be prudent to leave behind; and after drinking a stiff glass of brandy and water, she set off in high glee.

"Old Morgan grumbled terribly to my husband at having no provision made for him; but he was not in so many of madam's secrets, Lanfrydd told him, so he had no right to expect equal preferment; besides, his wife was living and well, and he was reckoned a good sort of man, so there was no need for his leaving Wales. This is all I have to tell you, Mr. Martin: pray let me hear whether you receive this letter safe. It might have been as much to madam Harland's interest to have remembered me, when she was thinking of those who had been her dupes.

"Yours sincerely, ANNE LANFRYDD.

"Pray burn this, for fear of accidents."

"Well done, Mrs. Lanfrydd!" exclaimed the colonel; "she would not require much pressing, I believe, to follow her late protectress's example: be that as it may, she meant to do us a service by her information, so we ought to give her credit for having seized so favourable an opportunity to renew her acquaintance with Martin.—But what think you of this sudden removal?" turning to Mr. Harland.

"That our late visit at Eskdale has created no small alarm. This almshouse scheme occurred very apropos to the scheming mistress, since I do not think earl Delmont would interfere with such patronage. To me the whole appears to have been a well-arranged fiction, to draw the old woman to London: once there, she will be at Mrs. Harland's mercy, and must go, say, and do, exactly what she pleases: probably she is better informed than she gave Martin to understand, or than we suspected; therefore she has been removed to prevent our obtaining any farther intelligence

ligence from her. Some other promises will be held out to keep her faithful; and what is of more consequence, they have succeeded in placing her out of our knowledge."

"Mrs. Harland's usual cunning is visible in every line of her letter," was the reply. "No time was to be allowed the worthless old wretch to deliberate; and as she did not suppose the wicked old crone would make a display of her letter, she doubtless hoped that it would be merely generally known she was gone to London. I wonder who it was hoped would give her the meeting at Gloucester. There certainly is, and has been, a wheel within a wheel, throughout the business. The lawyer is some agent of the earl's, who may have been instructed to decoy the old woman to some more secure place than London. How dreadful, when the power and the inclination to do wrong are combined!"

Mr. Harland agreed, "that much trouble and

and much expence seemed likely to be incurred; nay, even strange suspicions excited, to answer very little purpose: his lordship seems to trust too much to finesse. We never can be sufficiently thankful that Edward is secure from his machinations, since he would indubitably have been placed much beyond our reach."

The colonel was equally rejoiced, and Martin promised to answer the Welch landlady, and to request a continuance of her correspondence.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XVIII.

On the Monday after the receipt of Mrs. Lanfrydd's letter, Martin walked over to Bristol, to convey the colonel's orders to a tailor he had lately employed. On his return, he overtook the landlord of the Nannygoat, at whose house he had scraped an acquaintance with David Jenkins: the landlord was heavily loaded, having been to market; he therefore proceeded very slowly, hailing the valet as he passed, who eagerly seized the opportunity to inquire how farmer Griffiths and his man David went on.

"Very comfortably, I believe, sir, since David seldom comes near my house now. I think the farmer had a visitor last week —a brother of his, I suspect, of whom I have often heard him speak, who has some great

great place under government. There was certainly a great family likeness, for all they dress so differently."

Martin's curiosity was strongly excited, but he merely observed—"I also have heard the farmer's brother was a very great man, therefore it was the more kind to visit Broomfields."

"This was his first visit there, and I do not believe the farmer ever visited him in London; and they did not wish any body should know the great man was at their house, since David, whom I met on Saturday evening, affected not to know that any body had been at his master's; but cute as he thought himself, I could read in his looks that he was telling me a lie, and so I told him, since what did it matter to me who went to, or left the farmer's? I had seen a gentleman, who had a lawyer's blue bag in his hand, go down the lane, at dusk, on Monday evening. I rather wondered why a lawyer chose so late an hour for business, and I mentioned the circum-

circumstance in my tap-room. I did not see the gentleman's face then, as he shyed from me like when I met him at the turning, though I called out—'Good evening, sir—a fine night!' which made him brush past me, and take the road to the left. I cannot tell why, but he had made me curious, so I played at bopeep, till thinking I was out of sight, I suppose, he turned back, and almost ran down the lane leading to Broomfields, where I am sure he slept that night; for next morning I saw him turn out of the lane, from my bedroom window. I had gone up to get some change; and as he remained loitering about, I guessed he was in waiting for the Gloucester coach, which always stops at my house much about that time. When it drove up, my gentleman, still carrying his blue bag, crossed the way, calling out —'Can I have an inside place?'—Coachey said—'Yes:' so I opened the coach door for him, when I had a full view of his face; so, guessing where he had been, I made

sure

sure he was the London brother Griffiths often talks about, since, as I said before, allowing for the difference of dress, there was a wonderful likeness between them; and then that sly old David, to deny any body had been at Broomfields—I agree it did not concern me no more than Adam; but where was the use of keeping me in the dark? I was in hopes, I told David, the gentleman had brought some intelligence of William Mansel, who was worth all the family put together; and there was a report that he was gentleman Griffiths's by-blow."

"Your conjecture was very natural; but I never heard the elder Griffiths was a lawyer."

"Nor I; a blue bag is more genteel than a portmanteau; however, if ever I saw the farmer's brother, he was the man."

Martin was exactly of the same opinion; but having reached the entrance of Westbury, he parted from the curious landlord, who gave him a cordial invitation to the

Nanny-

Nannygoat, which he promised to profit by, and then made the best of his way home, when he related all that he had so unexpectedly learnt.

"Depend upon it," said Mr. Harland, "Griffiths was the lawyer who was to meet mother Gwynne at Gloucester: the time of his departure from the Nannygoat exactly tallies with her departure from Eskdale: he was to take the lead of her, and very probably to place her where no one will ever again hear of, or from her."

"The earl seems determined we shall find him guarded at all points: these inferior agents may prove very troublesome. Griffiths probably came round by Broomfields, in consequence of Mrs. Harland having been obliged to acknowledge William Mansel had absconded. I wonder how she excused herself for having kept him a moment in ignorance of so important a circumstance."

"No doubt they had a violent quarrel; and I can suppose the earl is in no very enviable

enviable state of mind, since the escape of Edward must always keep him upon the *qui vive.* I wonder who he really suspects of being privy to his departure—can he suppose he is gone for a soldier or a sailor?"

"Ere this, I dare say, he has ascertained that he has not entered the king's service: fortunately he has been gone too long to enable the great man to trace his route, admitting he suspected he was gone abroad."

"Yes, I do hope we have, in that respect, managed matters with nearly as much circumspection as the precious pair of principal plotters could have done."

The colonel agreed to the justice of the remark; but we shall not detail the various plans they formed during the three succeeding days, when a letter from sir Charles Freeman induced them to write him when he might expect them in Hampshire. Mr. Arlington, though much better, was still confined to the house. Our brothers

brothers took a very polite leave of him, the colonel promising to repeat his visit, should he, as he expected, return to Westbury. Mrs. Arlington was extremely polite, and the young ladies regretted they had seen so little of the gentlemen, in consequence of their father's illness, which had chastened Ellen's rather exuberant gaiety. They therefore separated, mutually pleased with each other, and all looking forward to a renewal of their acquaintance.

Martin had meanwhile been bidding adieu to Miss Curtis, who informed him that Miss Ellen had, to her great surprise, reclaimed her drawing of William Mansel, since should he ever return to Westbury, she should like to see the difference a few years might make in his appearance; and as her mother and she (Miss Curtis) maintained he was alive, why should she doubt their words? they never had deceived her, therefore she was resolved to believe what was so likely to remove the weight that had

had hitherto oppressed her spirits. Miss Curtis attributed this wise resolution to Mrs. Arlington's kind advice, while the colonel and Mr. Harland gave the youthful Ellen great credit for her discretion.

Having made every preparation for their departure the next morning, Martin joined farmer Abinger, who was leaning over his gate, talking to David Jenkins, who instantly addressed the valet, hat in hand, inquiring after his health, and regretting he was so soon to leave Westbury, though not for good, he understood the farmer.

"Oh, no; the colonel means to make these our head-quarters for the present. I hope Mr. and Mrs. Griffiths are well. Have they heard any thing of William Mansel—and is their son tired of a soldier's life?"

"They are very well, sir, and have often wondered you never called upon them since your return out of Wales. As to William Mansel, they make no doubt they shall hear from him when he wants a friend.

a friend. I am only afraid he has been the dupe of an enemy; for I did love him, that I shall never deny. As to master Jem, he will have plenty of time to sow his wild oats: he was in debt to but every body who would trust him; it has lately come out. As to young hopeful, he will make their hearts ache, I am of opinion; indeed, master wished me to believe that Jem has half ruined him, but he cannot take me in: however, thanks to you, Mr. Martin, he has behaved very kindly to me of late; and I was telling farmer Abinger, when you joined us, that he told me, only last week, that if he could make up his mind to let me go, he could place me as bailiff to a very great man, who would give me great wages; but then the farm is not in England. To be sure that makes a great difference; still to a man like me, who has neither chick nor child, it does not so much matter, and I should not dislike being Mr. Uppermost, with double my present wages, and a horse kept for

my

my use. What is your opinion of the matter, Mr. Martin? I am allowed time to reflect upon what I have been telling you, which I was not to have mentioned, for fear somebody else should step in my shoes; but how should they, as I do not know myself where the farm is, nor who it belongs to?"

"Then how can you make up your mind?" asked Martin.

"That was what I said," joined in the farmer. "Do not you make a blind bargain, David."

"Oh, I am to be allowed to see the farm, and I am to engage only by the year—not to mention a handsome premium; and all my expences are to be paid if I do not engage with the gentleman."

Martin declared, he could not advise in such a case; and the farmer bid him remember, that he might go farther and fare worse.

David agreed to this truism, but soon took leave, to communicate his bright prospects

prospects to some other person, equally under the seal of secrecy.

" This is some scheme of Griffiths's, to get rid of David," remarked the farmer. " He is too deep in his secrets, so he wishes to persuade him to snap at this strange offer: but I shall neither meddle nor make with them: let every man mind his own business, is my maxim, Mr. Martin."

The valet thought it the best plan, hastening to communicate David's good fortune to the gentlemen.

" Why, to what can all these plots and contrivances tend?" exclaimed Mr. Harland: " Dame Gwynne has been decoyed out of Wales, and this Welchman is to be decoyed to a still greater distance. Griffiths, I suppose, can be depended upon, but he cannot answer for his subaltern."

" This accounts for the brother's late visit," rejoined the colonel: " no doubt this wise proposal originated in him. The inferior agents are all to be removed, and the principals are to frame a plausible sto-

ry respecting William Mansel, which will effectually prevent our obliging the earl to acknowledge him to be his son."

"Their plan is no doubt already arranged, though why the earl has recourse to so much mystery, I cannot fathom. Why need there have been all this secrecy respecting Griffiths having visited his brother? I dare say David will finally become his lordship's dupe, as easily as dame Gwynne has fallen into Mrs. Harland's snares. Well, they will both be sufficiently punished for their duplicity in the end."

The colonel thought that both principals and agents would finally be unmasked, not perhaps by their efforts, or through their means; but Providence seldom suffered such wretches to escape the punishment due to their crimes.

CHAP-

CHAPTER XIX.

Sir Charles Freeman received his beloved nephew and friend as if they were his children, and was much flattered when Mr. Harland requested his advice as to the best mode of attacking his all-powerful late brother-in-law: he had been previously informed of every occurrence that had taken place since Mr. Harland had joined the colonel, and now expressed his satisfaction at the youthful Edward's being removed so completely out of his vile father's vortex; declaring, that were he Mr. Harland, he should leave the earl to the reproaches of his own conscience; he would be sufficiently punished, as his victim had escaped the snares which had been spread for him, and he must live in constant alarm, since he would never be able to fa-

thom what course those who had removed him intended to pursue.

The merchant subscribed to the justice of his observations, yet acknowledged that he should feel more satisfied, could he completely turn the tables upon his wily lordship.

The baronet urged, in reply, that he would not be doing his nephew a real service, were he, which was very problematical, to oblige the earl to concede to his terms. Lord Exmore would be much happier as Edward Melfort, and as his heir, than if forced upon a father who had taken such extraordinary pains to deprive him of his birthright.

The colonel feared the youth, who appeared to have inherited his father's full share of spirit, and an extra dose of courage, might pine in secret over his illegitimate birth; and except Mr. Harland brought the earl to terms, how could they persuade him he was born in wedlock?

The baronet thought he would believe

baron

baron Villars's assertions to that effect; at all events he foresaw that the youth would be rendered miserable, should they succeed in reinstating him in every right connected with his rank in life.

Mr. Harland was aware that he might increase lord Delmont's hatred towards him; therefore should he succeed in his endeavours, he meant to insist upon being nominated his nephew's guardian.

The baronet felt assured that the earl would never agree to such a proposal, and in short, argued so ably, that the merchant, could he have immediately relinquished the idea of unmasking the statesman, would have given up all hope of bringing him to terms; and at last he so far gave up to sir Charles's better judgment, as to declare he would not attack the earl in law, except he could do so with the certainty of gaining his cause; yet it was very galling to his feelings to see his eldest son, by his present wife, usurping the title and place in society belonging to

his sister's son, whom he had condemned to toil for his bread, or at most meant to send him out to fight his way to renown in India; nay, he had once thought of sending him to perish a victim to the yellow fever in the West Indies.

Sir Charles did not attempt to defend the earl: he merely wished to secure the real lord Exmore's happiness, and future well-being. The usurper of his title, if report spoke truth, was neither likely to gratify the earl's pride or ambition: he spoke after one of the Eton professors, who appeared to hold his talents very cheap, though at his age his father was the pride of that national seminary; therefore, perhaps they could not devise a severer punishment for the earl, than to see himself degraded in his successor.

The merchant, like sir Roger de Coverley, agreed that much might be said on both sides, promising to be wholly guided by circumstances; and as he was very averse to making colonel Murray a party concerned

concerned in the business, sir Charles was much more inclined to accede to his reasoning.—"The earl ought to account for the money he held in trust for his son; at present, it probably only enabled him to bribe or fee some of his inferior puppets." Nor did he less reprobate his behaviour towards the late Mr. Harland. As to the widow, no punishment that the law could devise was at all adequate to her crimes. Could he with propriety interfere, he should not despair of bringing the great man to terms, repeatedly urging the necessity of patience, great command of temper, and cool reasoning, should Mr. Harland be admitted to a *tête-à-tête* with the earl.

Our merchant, who possessed great patience, and who could argue any point with the greatest calmness, was, at the expiration of a fortnight, suffered to leave Hampshire, to make his grand attack upon the greatest statesman of the age. As he had merely a Russian servant in his suite, who

had joined him at Smallbury Priory, the colonel insisted upon his taking Martin with him, who would prove a most able auxiliary, should it become necessary to discover Mrs. Harland's abode, or those of any of the *figurante* or *corps de ballet*, acting under her directions. Sir Charles was not sparing of his advice; the colonel only wished him to be solely guided by his own feelings; and thus they parted, Mr. Harland having promised to write the moment he had seen the earl.

Upon his arrival in town, he drove to an hotel in Dover-street, and sent Martin, as had been agreed, to inquire whether lord Delmont was in London, at his magnificent mansion in Piccadilly.

In answer to his inquiry, the porter told him that his lordship generally came to town every morning to breakfast, though he always slept at Mortlake, where the countess and the family were.

Mr. Harland therefore resolved to call in Piccadilly between twelve and one the next

next morning. Should he not gain admittance, he would follow him to his office, where he might publicly request an interview. He had not seen his lordship since he waited upon him in consequence of the young Marcus's removal; nor had he, as has been remarked, ever been upon intimate terms with him.

Early in life the haughty highly-talented Marcus Mirvan had looked down upon the plodding merchant's clerk; and when Mr. Harland became a very rich man, and might have been considered even as the equal of earl Delmont in point of fortune, he had been not only absent from England, but owing to his lordship's behaviour to his sister, and to her son having been removed from Mortlake, all acquaintance between them had dropped, since he had even ceased to notice his elder brother, in consequence of his continued intimacy with the author of his sister's errors and subsequent misery.

His late visit into Wales must have de-

ranged so many of his lordship's plans, to judge from the late events, that he much doubted his meeting with a civil reception—a polite one he dared not expect; to address the great man in writing would answer no one good purpose, as he might say more in five minutes, and form a better judgment of his lordship's intentions in the same time, than were he to write and receive fifty letters upon the subject; therefore, having fully settled what to say and how to act, he proceeded to the handsome abode, for which the earl was indebted to his present countess.

Having declared his name to the porter, he was shewn into a parlour, where he was not allowed to remain long, being almost immediately ushered into a magnificent library by a servant out of livery, who requested he would take a seat; the earl was engaged, but would be at liberty to receive him in a very few minutes. Mr. Harland was not in haste, he said. The servant having withdrawn, he looked round

round the superb apartment, and would have found much to admire, had it been in the house of any other man; as it was, he fancied it was in unison with his lordship's mind, as it was lofty and even profusely furnished, without, to him, conveying any idea of home comforts. While glancing his eyes round him, and making these reflections, he caught the glimpse of a man in a glass, which proved to be in an adjoining smaller room, the door of communication having been left ajar. As this person's back was towards him, he could only discern his movements, though he made no doubt of its being the earl, from his morning dress, slippers, &c. Curiosity rendered him silently attentive; he saw him separate a sheet of note paper, write a few lines, fold it, and then direct it; a taper was burning on the writing-table at which he was sitting; he sealed the missive, and the next instant he tore it open, and threw it among a heap of letters upon another table. He then rose,

which induced Mr. Harland to take the chair which had been placed for him at the other end of the room, expecting he should soon be favoured with an audience; nor was he mistaken, since in a very few seconds he heard a door closed with some violence, and the next moment the still-handsome and elegant earl of Delmont entered the room from the adjoining study. Mr. Harland would have recognised him had they met in Siberia, and had our merchant been as welcome a guest as he knew himself to be the reverse, he would have had no reason to complain of his reception.

"As the favourite son of my late father's early and best friend, Mr. Harland must ever rank high in my esteem. I am happy to see you looking so well; the Russian climate seems to have agreed with you. Pray walk into this room."

Mr. Harland, who had merely hitherto bowed in silence, did as he desired, and his lordship took care to close the door himself.

himself. There were several chairs standing round the writing-table; the visitor took the one offered him; the earl threw himself into another, asking—"Have you left Russia, Mr. Harland? surely, rich as I have heard you are, you mean to give up the drudgery of business? We move in such different spheres, that it was by mere chance I learnt you were in England; nay, probably had not you visited Wales, I might have remained in ignorance of your return."

"Very possibly, my lord; I am fully aware of my insignificance, yet related as I am to your lordship's eldest son, who has been so long lost to his family and connexions, it was at least likely that I should have intruded upon you, to inquire what steps have been taken to ascertain what has been the fate of this unfortunate child."

"No doubt, Mr. Harland, your anxiety is very natural, and you cannot doubt my having had recourse to every likely means

to

to unravel the strange mystery which hung over the poor babe's removal, since to me it has long been of the first importance to ascertain whether he is living, or to have his death satisfactorily proved: hitherto my efforts have proved wholly fruitless, as I declare, upon my honour, that I continue in the most unpleasant state of ignorance and suspense respecting his destiny."

"I cannot doubt your lordship's assertion, since your countenance convinces me that you have no wish to deceive me; like you, it is of consequence to me to have the dear boy's existence placed beyond a doubt, or to have his being no more proved to my satisfaction, as the ten thousand pounds my father gave him on the day of his christening devolves to me, as heir at law to my late sister."

"I have no wish to dispute your claims, my good sir. The trustees appointed by your late father for Mrs. Murray, were also appointed my son's at the time of the divorce:

divorce: the interest I have continued to receive; but, of course, I consider it as a sacred deposit, never to be infringed upon till my son's fate is known; to me the uncertainty is most distressing, since my eldest son, by my second marriage, is at present merely a sort of usurper of his brother's place; and I dread any absurd attempt being made to bring forward some impostor to personate the lost Marcus: his strange disappearance may expose me to many impositions; indeed, after such a lapse of time, I cannot see how I could ever be at a certainty of his identity, should he ever be forthcoming; though I should be most ready to acknowledge his claims, could the various doubts I entertain be removed; in fact, I have always suspected, and never shall divest myself of the idea, that colonel and Mrs. Murray were the people who relieved me from the care of my son. Can you affirm, upon your honour, that I am mistaken?"

"I thought the colonel's brother in the first

first instance, and the colonel himself afterwards, had fully convinced your lordship that neither he nor my late sister were concerned in the business. I can, if your lordship wishes it, shew you a letter from the latter, written when she thought herself dying, that must convince you she was perfectly ignorant of her son's fate; though no mother could have been more anxious for his welfare; indeed her last request hastened my return to England, to endeavour to ascertain whither he had been removed, or for what purpose, as colonel Murray, though equally pledged to seek the child of his deceased wife, and to assert his rights, particularly wished that I should take upon myself the acting part in our researches, as we are determined to spare neither trouble nor expence upon this occasion."

"You have an undoubted right, Mr. Harland, to feel interested for the lost child; but I shall not admit of colonel Murray's interference in the business; both

both he and you must suppose I have and continue to make every effort to ascertain whether the boy is living or dead: as to the money you alluded to, I have already told you that the principal I cannot touch, were I so inclined; and as you are your late sister's legal heir, I have no objection to your henceforth receiving the interest; perhaps colonel Murray may be entitled to it during his life; this however you may settle between yourselves; I have ever considered the sum beneath my notice."

"No doubt, my lord; and as neither the colonel nor I would choose to appropriate it to our own use, suppose we all three agree to deliver it up to *William Mansel.*"

A silence of a few minutes followed this speech of the merchant's, whose eyes were rivetted upon the earl, who had too great a command of countenance to appear more than rather surprised; and as if endeavouring to fathom Mr. Harland's meaning, at last he said—"I never was more at a loss, sir;

sir; we are debating a very serious subject, therefore pray explain your meaning."

"I had hoped it had been perfectly clear to your lordship, as I alluded to the William Mansel who Mrs. Harland, your favourite cousin, placed, when a baby, under the care of a farmer, of the name of Griffiths, who resides at Broomfields, near Westbury, and whose brother was once your lordship's valet, but who at present holds a very lucrative situation in one of the offices under your control. Am I correct in my statement, my lord?"

"I readily agree, sir, that I have very properly rewarded the services of a very honest man. But pray proceed with your elucidation; you appear to have imbibed ideas for which you must have had some foundation; and in a matter of such importance, I do not choose to treat even avowed suspicions lightly."

The calm dignity of the earl's tone and manner, and the patience with which he listened to what Mr. Harland knew to be most

most galling truths, and, in fact, most pointed accusations, really surprised him; and he could not help mentally exclaiming—"Such a man would deceive any one less acquainted with his real character, and the real circumstances of the case;" when he thus proceeded—"Your lordship may then have heard that Mr. Griffiths, your quondam servant, about thirteen years ago removed his brother, then a mere higler, or better sort of labourer, from a cottage in Wales, to the well-stocked farm at Broomfields, merely in return, I have been told, for his taking charge of a child belonging to a person of great consequence; this at least was one story in circulation; be that as it may, a child certainly accompanied the family to Broomfields, about whom various contradictory tales were related; but if we may believe a Welch labourer who came with them to England, this baby was better than the goose who laid golden eggs to the farmer, though they did not behave to the poor child as

if he had been at all accessary to the wonderful improvement in their fortune. I am chiefly indebted for my information to my deceased brother, with whom I have corresponded for the last two years. I need not inform you what occasioned the breach between us; poor fellow! he was 'more sinned against than sinning,' and found, too late, that he had mistaken the shadow for the substance; since though he was your lordship's earliest and long-tried friend, and was doubly connected with your family, when he ceased to be useful, he was exiled into Wales, with a mere nominal and very inferior appointment, and where he was scarcely allowed common necessaries, while his really guilty wife was taking her pleasure in London, Gloucester, or elsewhere. I do not mean to defend his having given himself up to drunkenness and to low company; but had he been blessed with a better wife, he might have proved a very different character."

The

The earl had been, to appearance, very attentive, and now replied—" I dare believe, because I know you to be a man of strict veracity, that all you have been relating are well ascertained facts; still they have by no means explained why you wish we should be so bountiful to *William Mansel*—I repeat the name—whom you assert Mrs. Harland placed with the brother of my former valet; I assure you I cannot contradict you, nor can I take upon me to say why Griffiths removed his brother out of Wales; you cannot suppose such a man would dare to trouble me with his family concerns. As to the late Mr. Harland, I allowed him five hundred a-year after he retired into Wales, and the nominal title of my land steward; if his wife and he did not agree about the disposal of their income, surely I am not to blame, if she, knowing his propensity, kept him short of money; he might conceive I did not do half enough for him, and he may have led to your fancying I was implicated

plicated in Mrs. Harland's strange proceedings; but surely you cannot seriously suppose that she chose me for her confident respecting this child, whose parents you have heard are people of consequence, and who proved of such material benefit to the Griffiths family. Had any other person intruded upon me to relate such a strange rhodomontade tale, I should have felt highly offended. Your late brother wished to render you his friend; you were, as I should have been in a similar situation, very anxious to know what had become of your nephew, and he patched up this strange story, to lead you to believe that this *William Mansel* was the long-missing Marcus Mirvan. I give him great credit for his ingenuity, though I am very much surprised at a man of your sense placing any faith in such an improbable tale."

"There I cannot agree with your lordship, and I shall certainly, after what my brother has both written and told me, and what I have learnt from various other quarters,

quarters, continue to believe that William Mansel and my nephew were one and the same, till Mr. clerk Griffiths and Mrs. Harland convince me of my error, by informing me who were his parents, why he was placed at Broomfields, &c. as I can produce a person who has seen Mrs. Harland at farmer Griffiths's, and who heard enough to suspect she had privately removed the youth in question; from thence she proceeded to London, whither she was followed, and where, I am free to say, I suspect she came to consult future measures with your lordship."

"You really do me too much honour, my good sir; I should have hoped that my rank and situation in life, and the character I bear, would have prevented your forming, much less avowing, such degrading suspicions."

"Only make Mrs. Harland declare who William Mansel is, or, if you prefer it, let Mr. Griffiths make it clear to me that he is not your son, and I will acknowledge that

that I have grossly wronged your lordship: at present, I feel convinced that my nephew was, for some sinister purpose, removed from Mortlake, and was finally placed at Broomfields, where he certainly earned the bread he eat."

"I am very happy you have informed me how I can remove your absurd suspicions, Mr. Harland; though perhaps were I more *au fait* of this *mysterious youth's* story, I might have fallen into your error; and as you have pointed out how easily the matter may be set at rest, I will send for Griffiths, who will doubtless, when informed of our reasons for wishing him to be explicit, gratify our joint curiosity, as I cannot understand how Mrs. Harland came to be implicated in this strange business; early in life she moved in so very different a circle, that I should not have supposed she knew Griffiths when my valet; what could induce her to visit his brother, I cannot fathom; but it is now necessary we should receive some explanation.

nation. I was not at my office yesterday; but I remember three or four days ago being informed that Griffiths was confined with a very bad cold; I had occasion for some documents which he ought to have prepared, and received a note from one of the superior clerks, mentioning his illness as the cause of the delay I had complained of," turning over some loose papers upon a table near him, and at last exclaiming—"Here it is!" reading a few lines corresponding with what he had related; "however, if he can leave home, he shall come here; if not, we will go to him," ringing his bell, and telling the servant who entered, to send Mr. Gell to him immediately—"my private secretary," he continued, turning to Mr. Harland.

The merchant made no reply, as he was very much puzzled to divine what was to be the result of this apparent candid proceeding, since he felt convinced, or else his eyesight had strangely deceived him, that his lordship had been reading the very

note he had seen him write and seal, owing to the position of the glass; if so, some other deception was ready to be played off, to lull his avowed suspicions.

A very genteel, middle-aged man soon made his appearance, who was scarcely within the room, ere the earl exclaimed—"I must trouble you, Mr. Gell, to go down to the office immediately, take the first coach you meet with, and tell Griffiths I must see him instantly upon business of importance."

The secretary bowed and retired; when the peer requested his guest's permission to look over some papers, which required his immediate attention; adding—"There are books in the adjoining apartment, which may beguile the time which must elapse before Griffiths can obey my summons."

Mr. Harland immediately adjourned to the library, not sorry to have a few minutes allowed him for reflection, ere what he could not help considering as the second

cond act of the farce his lordship was acting began.

END OF VOL. II.

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